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GOING TO THE BAD.

By Edmund Yates.

CHAPTER I.

NO. 201.

"MIDNIGHT! Good Lord, how horribly familiar to me is the discordant clanging of those horrible chimes. For the first three weeks of my vacation they seemed to be constantly ringing in my ears, and I was just beginning to forget them, when I am summoned to their awful reality. Ten—eleven—twelve! go on, ring out the knell of my youth, and hope, and love; check off my life hour by hour, and tell me with infernal regularity at this time that another day is dead, that another set of opportunities has been wasted, and that I am so much nearer to my grave! Great Heaven, to think of the miserable manner in which my life is passing from me! When I first entered upon my profession it was not, God knows, the idea of making money that tempted me. I had grand visions of standing by the bedside of the sick, and scaring away the demons of disease and death that were hovering around it; I had hopes of achieving name and fame, with Lucy to share them with me, and what am I now? A man of thirty years of age, a prison surgeon, struggling on with the wretched pittance of six hundred dollars a year, with convicts and jail-birds for his patients—scoundrels without a spark of interest or gratitude, and whose only object, as far as I am concerned, is to en-



"MAKE YOURSELF EASY, SIR FREDERICK," SAID DR. TRAVERS, EARNESTLY, "ON THE SCORE OF LADY RANDALL'S ALLOWANCE."

deavor to deceive me by shamming maladies in order that they may escape from the labors of the treadmill and the crank."

As he uttered these last words the speaker rose from his chair, plunged his hands deeply into his pockets, and began pacing to and fro, looking round the room as though seeking for consolation, but finding none.

To a person mentally ill at ease, as he seemed to be, the aspect of the apartment was not calculated to afford any comfort.

It was a long narrow slip of a room, meagerly furnished with two or three chairs, a small iron bedstead, an old writing-table, the leathern top of which was ink-stained and knife-notched. On the bare white walls hung a fairly executed water-color drawing, representing a cosy little parsonage standing in the midst of a thoroughly English landscape with a background of high elm-trees, and with a gravel path evidently leading to the village church, the hoary, ivy-covered tower of which was dimly visible in the distance.

Beneath this picture were two small photographs; one of an old man, with flowing gray hair, the cut of whose garments and the height and rigidity of whose white cravat showed him to be a clergyman; the other of a benign old lady, with a sweet smile, and a soft, tender expression in her large eyes.

In a corner of the

room stood a huge wooden press, filled with stoppered glass bottles, arranged in rows, while in an open drawer at its base was a collection of surgical instruments, rolls of lint, plaster, and other appliances of the healing art.

Walter King, the man who was patrolling this chamber with wandering steps, was an average specimen of the young Englishman of the upper middle-class, tall and strongly built; nature had intended him to be good-looking, had given him a wealth of dark-brown hair and brilliant, hazel eyes; but hard work and disappointment in his career had robbed him of the luxuriance of the first, and dimmed the luster of the last. His brow was somewhat bald, and the locks that clustered thickly round his temples were streaked with silver: but the nose and lips were finely cut, and the lines round the latter, and the square jaw told of firmness and decision.

In his early youth he had lived the life led by most medical students during the time of their engagement at the hospitals; his pursuit of pleasure had been far more eager than his attentions to lectures; he was extravagant, not to say dissolute, and after scraping through his examination, and being admitted to the practice of his profession, he had gone down home to the old vicarage in Gloucestershire, with the intention of getting as much money as possible from his long-suffering father, and returning, at once to London, to re-commence his career of folly and dissipation.

But a different fate awaited him.

During his absence in the metropolis, Lucy Travers, the orphan niece of the childless old squire and great man of the parish, had come to keep her uncle's house, and with her, at first sight, Walter King fell desperately in love.

Not for her beauty, perhaps, though with her brilliant red and white complexion, her laughing eyes, her long, curling chestnut hair, and her sound, strong teeth, she was pretty enough for any man; but there was a nameless attraction about her, in her open frankness, in her honest sincerity, in the total absence of anything like affectation, or the tricks of the world.

Accustomed to flirtations with bar-maids and waitresses, or with women of even a lower order, Walter King found himself entranced by Lucy's modesty and purity, by her skillful management of her uncle's household, and by the attention and devotion with which she repaid the not too great kindness the old man had shown her in affording her the shelter of his roof.

Not much more than this had Squire Travers given to his orphan niece, and not much more, indeed, had he to bestow. Open-handed hospitality and devotion to field sports of all kinds, carried on for a number of years, had sadly crippled the squire's resources.

His vast estates were heavily mortgaged; his affairs were in the hands of trustees; and though he clung to his position, and rigidly demanded its acknowledgement by every one with whom he was brought into contact, it was felt by all, and by none more than the squire himself, to be merely a nominal one.

What did that matter to Walter King, full of youth and health, and ambition. When he found he had secured Lucy's love—and with such a frank, ingenious girl, he was not long in learning that important fact—he wanted nothing else.

The squire shook his head when the engagement of the young people was proposed to him. "He liked Walter well enough," he said; "he loved Walter's father, his old college chum, and he would even make the sacrifice of parting with his niece;" but he could not bestow on her even the smallest fortune, and the young man's pride was too great to accept the offer which was made to him, to marry Lucy, and eat the bread of idleness in her uncle's house.

No! he had his profession, and with that he would make his way through the world! Though an idler and a truant from work, he had always been regarded as clever, the authorities at the hospital had pronounced that

he had plenty of ability, and only needed application; and now that he had a spur to induce him to persevere, he would soon find the path clear before him.

A pleasant dream, but one not destined to be realized.

Walter obtained recommendations from some of his old friends, applied here and there, passed six months as assistant to an over-worked surgeon, just struggling into good practice in London, passed another six months as drudge to an apothecary and general practitioner in the country, where he had to attend to workhouse patients, and was knocked up at all hours of the night to drive miles over the wild commons in the midst of the howling storm, for a fee which in other days he would have given to a cabman. Finally, through the assistance of some of the squire's friends, obtained the vacant appointment of surgeon to the Westchester county jail, which, at the time our story opens, he had held for some two years.

This was the first evening since his return from his annual vacation. For one month in the year he was enabled to shake off the degrading effect of the association with convicts, the perpetual sight of the whitewashed walls, the long iron galleries, the spiral staircases, the clanging doors, the constant marching and counter-marching, inspection, and the wearisome detail of prison life.

Then he went straightway home to the quiet little village, where all the time not actually given up to Lucy, and that was not much, was spent in the company of his parents. At such times they were all tolerably hopeful, and managed to talk pleasantly of the future.

Something would happen for Walter's advantage, some one would die and leave him a fortune, or the squire's affairs would "get round," and in the meantime they were still young and loved each other dearly.

That was Walter's great joy; he knew that the girl whom he had selected from the rest of the world was perfectly and thoroughly devoted to him; that no matter how long his absence, how apparently distant the chances of their union, however great the attention paid to her by others, Lucy never gave him the smallest cause for doubt or mistrust.

She was his—his alone; and hugging that thought to himself, as his sole consolation, Walter King had said good-bye to those dear ones, and started back to the scenes of his dreary labor.

But the contrast between his dear old home, rich with so many memories, and lit up with the well-loved faces, and the cold solitude of his cheerless prison apartment, was almost too much for him to bear.

"I cannot stand it!" he cried aloud. "To think," he added, taking a portrait from his breast pocket and looking at it with affection, "to think that only last night I was with you, my darling, holding you in my arms, and gazing into your beautiful eyes, so tender and so true in their long regard, and that now it will probably be twelve months before we meet again. I can't stand it? The best part of my life is being wasted, and I will bear it no longer. I will throw up this appointment and seek for some foreign service, where I may have the chance of distinguishing myself. Lucy will not object, I think; and even my dear old father, and my darling mother, would forgive me, if they could only comprehend the misery of my life here."

He fell into a chair as he spoke, crossing his arms upon the table and resting his head upon them. In this position he remained but a few minutes, and when he raised his head, in answer to a respectful tapping at the door, there were traces of tears upon his face.

These he hastily brushed away as he cried out:

"Come in—what is it?"

The door opened, and a warder appeared; raising his hand and giving a military salute he said:

"Doctor, No. 201."

"Well, sir, what of him?" asked Walter King, still shading his eyes with his hand.

"Dead," said the warder, shortly repeating the military salute.

"Well, Macpherson, what is that to me?" said the doctor, raising his head and looking the officer full in the face. "I did not kill the man, I cannot bring him back to life; my business is to heal the sick, not to attempt to raise the dead!"

"Eh, Doctor King," said the warder, a fine old Scotchman, who had been for years an officer of the prison, and with whom the surgeon was a great favorite, "I didna ken you had got back, sir, and didna recognize you with your hand in front of your face—I thought Doctor Phillimore was still here."

"All right, Macpherson," said Walter King, with a weary smile. "I know you mean no offense, but why did you come to tell Doctor Phillimore, who would have no more power in such a case than I should?"

"I should think not, indeed!" said the old man, warmly. "For myself, I wouldna trust Doctor Phillimore with the life of a tom-cat. He's too fond of toddy!"

"Hush, hush, Macpherson, you must not say such things; and you have not answered my question."

"Well, sir, it is just this," said the old man, restraining his contemptuous anger, "Doctor Phillimore took great interest in No. 201, and when he went off duty, asked me to let him know at once if there were any change in the man's condition."

"He did not expect me back so soon."

"Just so," said the old man, peevishly.

"He's a careless body himself and gives no one else credit for being punctual."

"I suppose this man was in the hospital ward?" said Walter King, carelessly.

"No, sir," replied the warder, "Dr. Phillimore had him removed from there to the last cell in the south corridor."

"The deuce he did! As you say, Macpherson, he seems to have taken great interest in this particular patient. I must ask the doctor about him. Tell me, Macpherson, who was No. 201?"

"Entered in the name of Russel; five years penal, for forging and uttering bill of exchange," said the man. "Quite a high fellow, I believe, doctor, with easy manners and soft, white hands; but a bad lot, I should think, to judge by his shifty eyes and cruel mouth."

"Why you are quite a physiognomist, Mac," said Walter King, laughing.

"I dinna ken about feesonomy," muttered the warder, "but I've had unco experience of villains, not to recognize them at once; and that this Russel is one, I'll take my Bible oath."

"Your remarks of Dr. Phillimore's interest inspire me with a desire to have a look at this man. The last cell, in the south corridor, you say, Macpherson? Right, you need not wait, I will find my own way to it."

The warder saluted silently, and withdrew.

Left to himself, Walter King again commenced pacing the room restlessly, but the feeling of nervous irritability, under which he had previously been laboring, seemed to have vanished, and, in its place, he was haunted by a kind of inexplicable fear and mental terror, which impelled him from time to time to cast furtive glances over his shoulder, as though in dread of finding himself followed in his wanderings by a bodily presence.

"This is too absurd," he said, half aloud and half to himself. "I am as full of fancies as a sick girl, but a little touch of professional duty will soon put that to rights. What can have made Phillimore take such an interest in this prisoner, I wonder? I thought all he cared for was to draw my salary during the time he acted as my substitute, and, in return, to render as little service for the money as he conveniently could; for—as old Macpherson was just upon the point of remarking if I had not stopped him—my friend Phillimore is a dissipated dog, and if it was to the visiting justices he were responsible, he could never be employed, even to attend upon such patients as these. However, he seems, for once, to have found a case which has divided his attention with the whisky."

bottle and the sporting newspapers, and I shall be curious to see what it is like!"

He put on his hat as he spoke, and, taking a small hand-lamp from a niche in the corner, lit it with a match, and shading it with his coat, passed out of the room.

The warders patrolling the long stone corridors drew themselves up as the doctor passed, and saluted him respectfully, those on duty in the upper galleries, hearing clinking footsteps, leaned over in curiosity, and drew back as soon as they recognized the familiar figure of the surgeon.

On he walked, until he stopped at the door of the cell at the extreme end of the south corridor.

This he unlocked with a pass-key, which he took from his pocket, and, holding the lamp above his head, entered the cell, closing the door softly behind him.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTOR'S BARGAIN.

THE same strange, inexplicable terror which had beset Walter King while in his own room, came over him now, as he gazed around him. The cell was an ordinary whitewashed, narrow slip, with walls bare, save for two or three Scripture texts hanging on them, and devoid of all furniture except a small table, on which stood a few medicine-bottles which had been used by the dead prisoner during his illness, and a low truckle-bed.

Stretched upon this, and covered over with the coarse prison sheets, through which the dull outline was distinctly visible, lay a something—still and motionless, indeed, but in its dumb immobility, perhaps, more calculated to strike dismay into the breasts of those beholding it, than a raging maniac or bounding beast of prey.

Something of this kind must have struck Walter King, for, accustomed as he was to the sight of the dead, he hesitated before undertaking the task which had brought him to the spot, and seeking to discover, by an inspection of the corpse, the cause of the interest which Dr. Phillimore had taken in the patient when alive.

It was strange; he could not understand the reason, and yet he felt it almost impossible to proceed with his duty after his ordinary easy fashion.

He placed the lamp upon the floor, and seating himself on the edge of the table, looked hard at the figure stretched mute and motionless before him.

The wind, which blew in fitful gusts down the long corridor, found its way under the door of the cell, and the light of the lamp, thus disturbed, flickered to and fro upon the sheet, giving the idea that what lay beneath it was stirred in temporary unrest.

So vivid was this delusion that Walter King, calling his senses to his aid, and shading his eyes with his hand, peered long and earnestly at the ghastly object before him, in order to convince himself of the fantastic deception into which his nervousness had betrayed him. At any other time, not merely would he have laughed away the creeping terror which beset him, but would soon have destroyed its origin by ocular inspection of what he now stood aloof from, and only regarded with curious, awe-stricken gaze.

But to do that at that instant he felt was impossible. A chilling horror, such as he had not known since the ghost-haunted nights of his childhood, was stealing over him, and when he managed to withdraw his gaze from the spot on which it had been so long fixed, he found himself nervously glancing over his shoulder, while his blood ran cold, just as he remembered it to have done when, as a little child, he listened in fear and trembling to the goblin legends of the nursery.

The clanging of a door in a distant corridor had the effect of startling him into something like self-possession.

"This is too absurd," he said, placing his

hands on his head, and tightly pressing the temporal artery. "The quiet home life which I have been leading would seem to have had the effect of deranging my nervous system, and instead of coming back refreshed by the rest, and set up for a renewal of my dreary labors, I am as unstrung and as shaky as I used to be after a course of drink and dissipation in the old student days. However, there is an end to it," he muttered, rising from his seat upon the table, and advancing towards the bed. "Now let us have a look at this patient, whose case was peculiar enough to excite an interest in such a very easy going practitioner as our friend Phillimore."

As he bent over the bed a return of his tremulousness seemed impending, and he hesitated for an instant. Then, with one strong effort, he regained the mastery over himself, and with steady fingers seized the sheet and slowly withdrew it from the features which it covered.

Cold, clear-cut features, eminently aristocratic and high bred looking, even disfigured as they were by the absence of the natural shading of hair, which had been cut close, according to the relentless rules of prison discipline. Such of it as had been left, though, was light in hue and very thick, growing down into a peak upon the low, narrow forehead; the nose was straight and thin, with lithe, almost transparent nostrils; the lips small, compressed, dried, and almost colorless; the chin narrow and pointed. The eyes, which were wide open, were of a steely blue, like the frozen surface of a pool. Walter King thought, as he bent over and looked down into them.

"Well," said Walter King, after a prolonged survey, stepping back, but not removing his gaze, "old Macpherson was pretty right, I think—it is a bad face, sure enough; cold, hard, and cruel to a degree. If I know anything about physiognomy, it is a mercy for human nature that this man was taken away so soon—he cannot be more than eight and twenty—and I should think there are very few crimes at the commission of which he would have stopped. What killed him, I wonder? How stupid of me not to have looked at Phillimore's entry of the case. I have half a mind to—great God, what was that?"

He sprang forward and stared eagerly at the placid features, but after a moment's survey he regained his composure.

"The shadow thrown by the flickering lamp, no doubt," he muttered, "though it had just the effect of a mocking smile passing over the fellow's face. By Jove, I begin to suspect that old Macpherson is even shrewder than any of us believe him to be. He gave some hint that this man was well born, and assuredly his features, bad as they are, look thoroughly high bred. Some aristocratic scamp, no doubt, who, having run through his property, and declining to demean himself by accepting honest labor, went in for a little easy forging, and thus came to grief. I have had many of that sort though my hands since I have held this delectable appointment; and talking of hands, let me have a look at his! I recollect Macpherson alluding to them in support of his theory of the rascal's antecedents."

He pulled the coverlet lower down as he spoke, and lifting up the nerveless arm, took the fingers between his own and examined them closely.

"As I thought," he said; "hand as well bred as the face, and without its wicked expression. There is not much to be read from hands, though the chiromancers pretend there is; but one can tell easily enough that these fingers have never done any useful work, and that this pink, soft palm—how much of the vital heat it still retains! When did this man die, I wonder? Macpherson omitted to tell me that, and yet—great Heaven, what can be the matter with me to-night? Am I losing my senses?"

In obedience to a professional impulse, and without giving it a thought, Walter King had slipped his fingers down from the hand to the wrist, and under their encircling touch it seemed to him that he felt the faintest, feeblest beating of the pulse.

Yes, he felt it distinctly. He held his own

breath to make more certain of it, but this time there was no responsive throb.

He laid the hand gently down in its former position by the side of the body, and bending down within an inch of the face, looked into the glassy eyes, and taking his lancet case from his pocket, held one of the highly polished instruments in front of the parted lips; but on inspecting it no sign of human breath had dulled the lustrous steel.

Dead—he must be dead! The body spread out before him showed every sign of having succumbed to death—and yet, that pulsation!

Walter King threw himself upon his knees, and again holding his breath, laid his ear lightly on the left side of the chest.

For the first minute after he placed himself in this position he heard nothing. Then a tingle ran through all his frame as his ear, highly trained and accustomed to such duty, detected a faint muffled heart-beat. Again! Then silence, and let him strain ever so much he heard no more.

But Walter King had heard and felt enough to nerve him to immediate action. He sprang quickly to his feet, muttering to himself:

"Catalepsy! this is a case of catalepsy, that wondrous disease of which I have heard so much, but of which I never saw an example. Now, then, to prove whether the experiences which I have read were triumphs of science or mere lying legends served up for the gratification of the credulous!"

As he spoke he picked up the lamp from the floor, and was hurrying towards the door of the cell, when he suddenly stopped.

"Stay," he murmured reflectively, "what am I about to do? This poor wretch feels nothing, knows nothing; even if there be a faint spark of vitality left within him, he has to be left alone and it will soon be extinguished, swiftly and painlessly. Why should I try to blow it into a flame? Life to him, if he were to recover it, must for some time henceforth mean nothing but the corridors of this jail, or the stone quarries of Portland! Better let him ebb away, and—no, by Jove, I will try for it."

The prospect of a gladiatorial contest with the Destroying Angel, whose sworn foe he was, settled the question at once in the young man's mind. Be the result what it might, he was determined to use his professional skill, and he rushed away to his room to procure the necessary appliances.

Within five minutes he returned, bearing with him, in addition to the lamp, a small galvanic battery.

All was as he left it; the figure motionless on the bed, with the head and chest uncovered, and the arms stretched out stiffly over the sheet.

The doctor placed the lamp on the table, and at once commenced getting the galvanic apparatus into working order.

"It scarcely has sufficient power, this battery," he muttered to himself; "but one must make the best of what tools one has. Now, if this fellow were only laid out on the table at the lecture theater of St. George's, and old John was working at the battery, and I had the directing of the wires, we could give him a shock that might be of some service to him! Let me see, now where shall I make the first application?"

He turned round as he spoke, and made one step towards the bed, but instantly stopped and reeled back against the table.

The eyes of the prostrate figure, no longer dim and glassy, but full of expression, half curious, half imploring, were turned towards him—were shining full upon him.

Then, as Walter King, breathing hard through his set teeth, and trembling in every limb, despite his efforts of self-control, stood speechless, gazing at this fearful sight, the lips of the figure slowly parted, and the faintly-uttered words, "Where am I?" issued from them.

At the sound of the voice, scarcely human, though it was in its faintness, the doctor seemed to recover himself. He stepped swiftly and silently forward, and the next instant was kneeling by the figure's side.

"Where are you?" he whispered "in safety, and with a friend; but you must be silent, or your life is not worth an hour's purchase—you hear me?—do you follow me? I must leave you for a minute: but while I am away you must not attempt to move hand or foot, or to speak. Give me some sign that you understand me."

The man had, apparently, not sufficient strength to make any movement; but he looked up with a glance which was intelligent enough, and Walter King, rising to his feet, left the room.

He hurried along the corridor until he reached a large press, warmed with hot air, in which the linen, blankets, and bedding of the prisoners were placed to dry, and which was always kept at a very high temperature.

Opening the press, and rapidly scanning its contents, Walter King selected two large, thick blankets, which he felt to be thoroughly penetrated with heat, and throwing them over his arm, retraced his steps to the cell.

Closing the door behind him, he stripped the sheet from the still motionless body, and enveloping it from head to foot in the blankets which he had brought with him, raised the head on his arm, and taking a silver flask from his pocket, poured a little of its contents into the mouth.

The man's eyes at once opened and dilated, and a faint streak of color dawned in the wan and ghastly cheeks.

"Good, so far," muttered the doctor to himself. "I never thought the dear old governor's best liqueur brandy would ever be put to such base use as that—for it is a base use to save a poor devil from death, and hand him over again to transportation. However, my work is not half done yet."

As he spoke, he stripped off his coat, and kneeling upon the bed, and passing his hand under the blanket, commenced rubbing the chest, and all the region round about the heart, with his palm.

Under the friction, the chill rigidity of the flesh gradually gave way, and in the course of half an hour a genial warmth diffused itself throughout the body; the stiffness of the limbs dissolved, and the man, bending himself into a natural, easy attitude, laid his arm under his head, and fell into a soft, quiet slumber, during which Walter King, seated by the bedside, kept his gaze intently fixed on him.

His sleep lasted for about ten minutes; at the end of which time the patient uttered a low moan, shifted himself uneasily to and fro, and finally opened his eyes. As they rested upon the doctor, a semi-consciousness of his position seemed to break upon him. He glanced round the walls, and a visible shudder passed through his frame.

Not one of these movements was lost upon Walter King. He leaned forward, placed his arm under the man's head, and looking into his eyes, seemed to invite him to speak.

"Where am I?" he asked, in a low faint voice. "In the prison?"

"Yes, you are still in the prison, Russell."

"And you; who are you?"

"I am the surgeon of the jail."

"The surgeon of the jail," repeated the man, with a great effort raising himself up on to his elbow; "no, surely not? Where is Dr. Phillimore?"

"Dr. Phillimore was only here for a time," said Walter, looking hard at him; "and I, as I tell you, am the regular surgeon of the jail."

"And you are going to remain here on duty now?"

"Certainly, it is my place, I tell you."

The man gazed at him for a moment with a despairing look, then muttering, "Too late, too late!" fell back upon the pillow.

"You must not excite yourself in this way, my good fellow," said Walter King, compassionately, "or you will undo all the good I have been able to accomplish for you. Do you know that you have been within the very jaws of death? Do you know that you have had a very near chance of undergoing a worse fate even than death itself—that of being buried alive?"

With his head hidden in his hands, the man moaned forth:

"That fate is reserved for me still. I shall be buried alive within these prison walls for the next seven years; no life, no light, no hope! O, God! how much more preferable were death to that!"

He spoke with such keen agony in his voice that Walter could not help pitying him, though he was a felon. He laid his hand softly upon the man's head, muttering, "'Tis a hard fate, indeed!"

Instantly the man raised his head and looked the doctor full in the face.

"Do you think so?" he said. "If so, why not release me from it?"

"I, how could I release you, even if I would?"

"Easily enough. If you had only delayed your return for twenty-four hours, and that cursed attack of catalepsy—I know what it was, you see, well enough—had not come upon me, I should have been free now."

As the man spoke he frowned heavily, and with the contracting brows, appeared immediately above them on his forehead three plainly defined parallel bars of red. Where, and on whom, had Walter King seen these marks before? The action of the hand, too, as though tossing something lightly away from him, with which the speaker concluded his sentence, was also strangely familiar to the doctor. Who was this man, and where had they met before?

"You would have been free!" he said, after a moment's pause. "Indeed! how would you have gained your freedom, and how did my coming back interfere with it?"

"There is no need for me to tell you that," said the man, doggedly. "Suppose I had known your substitute, Dr. Phillimore, years ago; suppose my name was not what I have given it here, and that I were not what I seem to be, and that I had met Dr. Phillimore in society, and that, for old acquaintance sake, he had consented to square it for me so that I should get out of this infernal place undetected—I don't say that it was so, and only ask you to suppose such a thing, mind—then you can see how your return and my attack, from which you have just recovered me, and, small thanks to you, interfered and upset the plan."

Again the contracted brows and the parallel red bars—again the lightly tossing motion of the hand!

"I am very sorry to have been in any way the cause of thwarting your admirable scheme," said the doctor, sardonically; "but you see my business is to attend to criminals—not to connive at their escape. It is much to be regretted, for your sake, Mr. Russell, or whatever your name may be, that the surgeon of this prison is not Richard Phillimore, but Walter King."

"Walter King!" cried the man, springing up into a sitting position, and glaring eagerly at him. "You are Walter King."

"That's my name."

"That's what it was," muttered the man to himself; "I could not make it out. And so it is not your business," he continued, with a sneer, "to connive at the escape of criminals? Now, sir, I demand, as a right, that you help me to get out of this place."

"As a right!" cried Walter King, in astonishment. "And by what right, pray?"

"A life for a life," said the man, bringing his hand down with force upon the bed. "Is your memory good, Walter King? Throw it back sixteen years, and conjure up to yourself a bright sunny August day; the scene, the river Thames, just above the weir at Penton Hook; the actors, a knot of laughing boys, who have come up there from Laleham grammar school to bathe. The little ones paddle near the bank—those older and bolder swim merrily out into mid-stream. Suddenly a cry is raised. The best swimmer of the school has passed across the river twice, and he is coming back for the third time. When he has traversed half the distance, his strength fails him, he loses his presence of mind, he splashes and fights with the water, instead of striking out

with deliberate skill. Some of his comrades see him, and raise the alarm. The young lad who has finished his bathing, and is dressing himself on the bank, hears it. Without stopping to take off his clothes he plunges in; a few rapid strokes take him to the spot, and then he disappears. The drowning boy is older and heavier than he, and seizes him in his grasp, but the lad manages to shake himself free, and just as the struggles of the exhausted boy are becoming fainter and fewer, he seizes him by the hair, and drags him safely to the shore. The name of the boy so nearly drowned was Walter King; the boy who preserved him, Frederick Randall; and they are both here, looking at each other, in this prison cell, to-night."

The mystery of the three parallel red bars on the forehead, and the free, light motion of the hand, was solved now. In the words he had just heard, Walter King recognized and admitted the truth.

"Good God! Are you Fred Randall?"

"Yes, sir," exclaimed the prisoner, bitterly. "Russell, the convict forger, is Fred Randall, late a captain in the army, and nephew and heir to Sir Compton Randall, baronet."

"And do none of your friends know of the plight in which you are?"

"Not a single one, I am happy to say. Directly I found things going to the bad I changed my name, and gave out I had gone to Australia. I should have gone if that infernal bill on which I had written the wrong name had not turned up in the very nick of time and got me arrested. However, let us be practical, and talk about the present. I saved your life once, King, and you must save mine now. You must get me out of this at once."

"But how?" said Walter; "how is it to be done? I allow my indebtedness to you and your claim upon me, but how am I to serve you?"

"It will not be very difficult," said Randall, after a few minutes' consideration; "the people here believe me to be dead, do they not?"

"Well?"

"Mine is a curious case, in which you have taken a great interest; you wish to investigate it further, to ascertain the real cause of death after so sudden and apparently so slight an illness. In your researches you wish to be assisted by Dr. Phillimore, and in order that you may be undisturbed in your operations you have the—the body," and he smiled grimly as he said the word—"you have the body conveyed across to his house, just outside the prison gates. You see the idea?"

"I do," said Walter King very slowly. "Do you believe Dr. Phillimore is to be trusted?"

"I know it," said Randall with emphasis; "I have a hold over him which compels him to be obedient to me. Say, will you do this? If so, not merely will you be repaying the debt of life which you owe me, but will be providing magnificently for yourself in the future. Sir Compton Randall is very old, his estates are vast, and when I am master of them I will take care that you"—

"Stay," said the doctor, holding up his hand; "I owe my life to you, and I consent to repay the debt in the way you wish; but if you should grow to be as rich as Croesus I would take no sump of your money. I would hold no further communion with you! Nor will I even do as you wish unless you make one bargain with me; and that is, you swear to me that if I restore you to freedom you will consent to forego your evil courses and endeavor to lead a life worthy of your name and position in the world."

"I swear," said Randall solemnly.

"Mind," said the doctor, "if you break this oath and return to vice, so sure as I am a living man I will revenge myself for this breach of trust and duty, which you have put pressure upon me to make, and will hunt you down. Remember that," he cried, holding his finger menacingly in the air, "for as sure as I stand here I will be as good as my word."

Shortly after daybreak the next morning

Macpherson and another warder issued from the side portal of the prison, bearing between them a hand litter, on which lay a muffled, shapeless burden.

With this they crossed the road, and as they approached Dr. Phillimore's residence, with Walter King walking by their side, the door softly opened, and the doctor appeared in the passage. In obedience to a beckoning motion of his finger, the warders then entered the house, and depositing their burden in the library, withdrew.

No sooner had they gone than Dr. Phillimore, locking the door, pulled off the coverings of the litter, and assisted its occupant to rise.

When Frederick Randall, for it was he, sat up, he shook hands heartily with Dr. Phillimore; and then turning to Walter King, offered to repeat the action.

But Walter King drew back; "What I have done," said he, "Mr. Randall, has been purely a matter of duty on my part, and I wish to hold no further communion with you. I have performed my portion of the contract, now it is for you to keep your oath!"

CHAPTER III.

HONOR AMONG THIEVES.

THE wind was howling in all its autumnal fury, and the tidal boat plying between Boulogne and Folkestone had hard work to make anything like headway. Now she dipped down into the trough of the sea, and rolled over helplessly from side to side, while the green foam-crested billows at her stem and stern threatened to pour in and overwhelm her. Then, when her destruction seemed most imminent, she would rise buoyant as a cork and skim along with tolerable steadiness until the shock of another enormous wave would cause her to stagger as though she had received a giant's blow, and cause the few passengers who had ventured to remain on deck to shriek, gesticulate, and swear, according to their various nationalities.

The nationalities were various, but English people predominated; for the time was towards the end of October, when milord and milady are returning from their round of foreign travel to the pleasant shooting and the pleasant country life; when the lawyers, who enjoyed the earlier portion of their long vacation in climbing Swiss mountains, and the latter portion in "doing" Italian picture galleries, are coming back to their clients and their briefs, and when most persons have begun to think with a shudder of the long gloomy galleries and vast apartments of continental hotels, and to look forward with delight to the roaring, sea-coal fire, and the snug comfort of home.

There are some Americans, also, among the passengers, who, for the most part, were anticipating the pleasant time in spending the ensuing winter in London, though one or two of them, members of Congress, had engaged passage in the next outgoing Cunard steamer, being anxious to get across the Atlantic before the opening of the session at Washington.

But the majority of them had made arrangements for locating themselves at Morley's, at the Langham, or in private apartments during the next six months; for, our American citizen who at one time, and not very long ago either, merely looked upon England as a baiting place on his way to and from the continent, has of late wonderfully changed in this respect, and now not merely passes a considerable time of his absence from home in London, but speaks of the old city with a kind of filial respect and affection; finds himself warmly received in her best society, and is altogether pleased with his stay in her precincts.

This must be an American gentleman extended at full length on one of the divans of the wretched little cabins. He has been actually ill, but his clean-shaven cheeks are deadly white, his long, gray hair is disheveled, and now and again he plucks at his grizzled goatee beard with the energy of despair.

Seeing the steward approaching, he struggles into a sitting position, showing himself to be a tall, gaunt, large-boned man, dressed in a frock coat, waistcoat and trousers of dark color, and wearing in the midst of his buttonless, snow-fronted shirt a large diamond solitaire.

He seems to think that it would be undignified in him to appear without his hat, for he immediately put on a tall, black specimen of the latest monstrosity in shape, which the genius of the Parisian hatter has invented, and thus duly accoutered, seizes upon the steward as he passes by.

"Say mister," catching the man by the sleeve, "in this boat on time?"

"On time? Don't know what you mean, sir," said the man, staring at him; "she will be in in twenty minutes."

"What's that the man says, Hiram? Won't you help me to sit up and fix myself a bit, I am so mussed with lying here; and there's that real elegant bonnet, that cost me forty dollars in Paris, crushed as flat as a buckwheat cake. Say, won't you give me your hand?"

The gentleman addressed as Hiram turned round at the sound of the well-known voice by which these words were uttered, and staggered across the cabin to the opposite sofa, on which lay a small, thin, elderly lady, with sharp features and bright black eyes, but she was somewhat unsuitably dressed for traveling, in a rich silk skirt and embroidered jacket; and her blue-black hair, though somewhat disarranged by the journey, still showed signs of having been elaborately frizzed, while heavy bracelets encircled her arm and rich jewels encumbered her fingers.

"Say, now, Hiram," she said again, in a thin, querulous voice, "won't you jest give me a raise up? When we was to home at Titusville, there was ne'er a man was a better husband than Hiram P. Adams, but since we have come abroad, you propose to pay me no more attention, I think. You're not posted up in French politeness, Hiram—why, certainly not? What's come of Minnie, too, I wonder?"

Mr. Hiram P. Adams bent down with much solemnity and pulled his wife into a perpendicular position; and exhausted by the effort, and finding it impossible to keep his legs any longer, sunk upon the floor at her feet.

"Wal," he said, remaining in his recumbent posture, "Minnie is all right, I guess; she ain't never sick, and them two Englishmen is looking after her. And speaking of Titusville, Mrs. Adams, I would like well enough to be home there now, bumming round Oil City, Reno, or any part of the neighborhood of the Allegheny Valley."

"How low you du talk, Hiram," moaned his wife; "won't you think that you are not at the bar of the Crittenden House or the Bush? Jest won't you recollect that it's European manners as is wanted here, and that you ain't a refining, a barreling, and a storing of petroleum jest now."

"I think I'd like not to be so cussed sick, that's what I think," groaned the unfortunate man in his despair.

It's doubtful what explosion this desperate protest might not have called forth from Mrs. Adams, but the conversation was interrupted by the appearance at the cabin door of a young girl, who, with an exclamation of surprise, immediately hurried towards the speakers.

Such a pretty girl, of a delicate, refined type, with small thin nose, and kissable rose-bud of a mouth, and long, almond-lidded eyes. Her slim but well developed figure was suitably and neatly attired in a well-fitting yachting suit of blue serge, over which she wore a heavy seal-skin jacket. Ordinarily, no doubt, her complexion was somewhat pale, but she had been on deck buffeting with the bluff wind, and the contest had given her a splendidly glowing flush of health in her cheeks, while a little crisp hair which floated on the forehead, and the two long curls which hung over her shoulder were crystallized with the salt spray.

"Why see, you folks. Are you down here still?" she cried, holding up her hands in astonishment. "Mamma, dear, I thought you would be on deck, and Sir Frederick has been looking for you everywhere. We are just into harbor now, and you are the last people left in the cabin."

"That's just the way with your father, Minnie; he is never in time, he is always doing the wrong thing, and he is always making me feel mean."

The wretched Hiram, for the last few minutes, who had been trying the experiment, whether his long legs were steady enough to bear him, commenced to protest; but his pretty daughter stopped his mouth with a kiss, and having assisted her mother to rise, shaken out and smoothed her dress, and given as much shape as possible to the flattened bonnet, she said:

"Now, mamma, dear, take hold of papa on one side, and me on the other, and we will get you up stairs."

But Mrs. Adams was not yet quiet.

"Where's that Ujaney?" she cried, turning to her daughter.

"Poor mademoiselle! she has been perfectly helpless," said Minnie. "I don't think I ever saw Sir Frederick laugh so much as when we first discovered Eugenie, a mere limp bundle, lying against the smokestack."

"Helpless, indeed!" cried Mrs. Adams. "How's that for impudence? I should like to know what is the use of having Biddies if they are to be sick jist when they're needed?"

"This way, Mrs. Adams," cried a rich, jolly voice, at the top of the companion-ladder. "Let me give you my hand. Miss Minnie, here is Sir Frederick, waiting to escort you; in five minutes more we shall be alongside the pier."

The speaker was a stout, red-faced man, of about forty years of age; his features were somewhat coarse and bloated; his black hair was cropped rather close to his head, and his eyes and pendulous nether lip spoke gravely of addiction to the pleasures of the table.

Close by his elbow stood another man, tall, and from as much of his figure as could be judged from the heavy ulster overcoat in which it was enveloped, apparently powerfully built.

The wind still blowing freshly, he had pulled his sealskin traveling cap so far over his face that nothing was to be seen of his features save the lips, the hard and cruel outlines of which were visible beneath his blonde mustaches, and the irresolute chin covered with a fair and pointed beard.

But whatever might have been in his appearance, it must have been pleasing to Minnie Adams, for as she took the arm which was proffered to her, and laid her pretty little hand upon its rough sleeve, she looked up confidently, and even lovingly, for an instant, beneath the peak of the sealskin cap, and then, with a sigh, dropped her gaze upon the deck.

"You surely won't think of going to London to-night, Mr. Adams," said the stout man, whom they addressed as "Doctor." "It's growing dark and chilly, and you must be all thoroughly worn out by your voyage."

"Wal, sir," said Hiram P., who finding himself detected in the very act of feeling in his pocket for his packet of chewing tobacco, out of which he thought he might help himself unobserved. "Wal, sir I guess Mrs. Adams is the boss of this party, or Miss Minnie, and I am, it seems, to fill the position of one of our colored brethern on the other side."

"Say, now, gentlemen. Hiram's going in to be champion talkist, don't you think?" said Mrs. Adams, turning to the others, with a thin smile. "I have not heard him make such a speech since he ran for mayor, and was beat by Samuel S. Stoddle on the Democratic ticket."

"Oh, no," said Minnie, chiming in to interrupt any further discussion; "don't let us go up to London to-night; let us stop at the hotel; there is sure to be a good one here, and you will lay over there, won't you, Sir Frederick?"

"If you do, miss, certainly," was the whispered reply, for which he received a gentle

pressure on his arm as thanks. Then he said aloud: "Good hotel, Miss Adams? I should think so, by Jove; the Pavilion is not to be beaten in the world."

"I guess one can get a little lunch there—some stowed oysters, some clam chowder a squab or two, some pie, and a cup of English breakfast tea," said Mr. Adams, who by this time had managed to extricate what he required for his consumption, and was in the full enjoyment of it.

"Well, we can do even better than that at the Pavilion," said the red-faced man, with a jolly laugh. "However, here we are, close alongside. Where is your maid, Miss Minnie? I will get Sir Frederick's man to stay with her, and if she points out your trunks, and I know you have a perfect array of them, he will assist her in getting them ashore, and passing them through the custom-house. Meantime, we will go along to the Pavilion, but we may as well press on, as they are generally pretty full. I ought, by rights, to have telegraphed for rooms."

"Do you hear that, Hiram?" cried Mrs. Adams, in her shrillest tone to her husband, who was just beginning to get into the richness of his May-flower quid. "Hurry up, man, hurry up I say! one would think you was in the parlor to home, with your feet to the furnace, and Elder Colfax, of East Hickury, talking to you about your soul's salvation."

"Which, leaving out Elder Colfax, I wish I was," muttered Hiram to himself, as he proceeded in search of the French waiting-maid, and encumbrances, which the fashionable leanings of his wife inflicted upon him.

Although it was growing dark, and the weather was anything but inviting, such of the belated visitors as still lingered at Folkestone had turned out as usual, to witness the arrival of the boat, and the disembarkation of its sick, drenched and discomforted passengers.

Between two lines of snug, rosy-cheeked, self-satisfied individuals, all of whom had just eaten a hearty luncheon, and many of whom were puffing away at their cigars, the home-returning travelers marched along.

Some of them peered at them, as though searching for the faces of friends among the crowd; others, prostrated by their recent sickness, hurried along, as though only intent on reaching their destination in the train or the hotel.

Oddly enough, Sir Frederick, although he had not suffered at all during the voyage, and had a pretty girl like Minnie Adams on his arm, seemed to shun the observation of the crowd. He pulled his sealskin cap yet further over his eyes, and hurried along at a pace which made it somewhat difficult for his fair companion to keep up with him.

What Mr. Hiram P. Adams had looked forward to as a lunch, but what was in reality an excellent, substantial dinner, appearing extra enjoyable to the travelers, after the light and fanciful repast to which they had recently been accustomed, it was discussed, and the American family, wearied out with the travel and fatigues of the day, sought their couches at a comparatively early hour.

After they had retired, the two young men, who had remained in constant attendance upon them, proceeded to the smoking-room, which they fortunately found empty.

Ordering each a steaming glass of whisky toddy, they lit their cigars, and the taller and younger man dragging up a huge arm-chair in front of the fire, threw himself into it, and plunging his hands in his pockets, stretched himself out at full length and with his eyes fixed upon the fire, began smoking steadily.

The doctor walked up to the window, and pulling aside one of the heavy curtains, looked out across the harbor.

"The rain has cleared off," he said, "but there seems to be a devil of a wind blowing; the clouds are scudding along at a rapid rate and the white-crested waves look angry enough in the moonlight."

"I wish they would run in and swamp this whole infernal place," said his companion, ex-

pressing a mouthful of smoke and holding his hand before his face to shield it from the blaze.

"Why, what's the matter with you, Fred, to-night?" said the doctor, turning round and looking at his friend. "Ever since we landed you have been cross and down in the mouth, not to be recognized as the same man who was the life and soul of Homburg only a month ago."

"Matter with me!" cried the man addressed, savagely. "It's enough to take the pluck out of the best man to bring me back to such an infernal country as this, more especially under the circumstances in which I am placed."

"Dear me, is it indeed?" said the doctor, sarcastically. "Seemed to be devilish pleasant circumstances, and such as I should not at all object to suffer under!"

"Of course you would not," said his companion, fiercely, "of course you would not, Dick Phillimore, because you are as hard and as plain and as common as dirt, because you never knew what delicacy was—refinement was, and so long as you can get plenty to eat, and drink, and smoke, all of the best, so long as you can have a good bed to lie on, and good clothes to wear, you don't care what anyone says or thinks about you."

The doctor had frowned at the beginning of this sentence, but before it was concluded, he burst into a jolly laugh, and said:

"You are quite right about that, Fred; I'll be hanged if I do!"

"Now, I am different," said Sir Frederick. "I was happy and in good spirits as you say at Homburg, but why? Because there one could live with a pleasant, jolly set of fellows—Frenchmen, Americans, Russians, what not—where one's rank was respected, and where they knew or cared nothing for one's antecedents. Here, in this accursed place, you are—I am always on the lookout for someone to recognize me as Russell, his fellow jail-bird, in the Westminster County Prison. Besides, it's a most horrible nuisance to a man of my position, to have to live from hand to mouth, not knowing what may turn up next day, and entirely dependent for his livelihood on horse-racing and cards."

"Yes," said the doctor, shaking his head, as he looked at the fire, "it's very much to be regretted that your respected uncle, Sir Compton, did not leave you his money as well as his title. He could not prevent your becoming a baronet, but he determined, so far as lay in his power, you should be a devilish poor one, so he left all his estates to your cousin, the parson. I wonder whether the old boy could ever have heard of any of the little games which you used to carry on in your early days, my sweet youth. If so, there is no wonder at his being somewhat shocked."

"I have thought of that myself," said Sir Frederick Randall, reflectively. "If my uncle had heard anything against me, he could only have learnt it from two persons—one of them would be you—and I don't think you would be likely to betray me!"

"You may safely assume that, dear boy," said the doctor, pleasantly patting his friend on the shoulder. "If I had betrayed you, it would have been on condition of receiving a large sum of money, and from the condition of your dear Richard, you may easily argue that he has not yet, at all events, touched the ingots, and is at present dependent for his support upon you and upon the general youthful ignorance of the games of cards and billiards."

"There was only one other man whom I entrusted with my real name, when I was in that horrible prison, and that was King—Walter King—he must have told my uncle!"

"I think not," said Dick Phillimore, placidly. "King is not a friend of mine; in fact, I hated him from the bottom of my heart, and I am bound to say that he has a very manly and genial contempt of me, partly founded on my ignorance of my profession, partly on account of my fondness for this very seductive tippie, whisky toddy, and my general dissipation. But still, he is a gentleman, every inch of

him, and the last man on earth to go back on his word, when he has once given it! Speaking of King brings all the incidents of that extraordinary night forcibly to my mind," continued the doctor, leaning back, and puffing at his cigar. "Let me see—it is just three years ago, and"—

"Stop, for heaven's sake!" cried the baronet, passionately. "What pleasure can you have in torturing me by recalling that scene of my misery. I hate to think of it—I shut it from my thoughts, it is in the past as terrific to me as will be in the future, the day of my death when it really arrives. You never think of such things! Are you never memory-haunted or conscience-struck?"

"Never," said the doctor, blowing his smoke into the air, and looking up to the ceiling. "I may say never, unless, indeed, I have been silly enough to eat Welsh rabbit, or anything indigestible just before going to bed; then I have an awful time of it, and fellows tell me who have been sleeping in the next room, that I yell out and kick up the devil's delight; but that's only happened to me once or twice in my life. Ordinarily, whatever I have done or intend to do, never troubles my conscience, and to tell you the truth, I don't think I've got one!"

"You are a lucky fellow," said Sir Frederick, bitterly.

"Yes," said the doctor, smiling pleasantly; "the less one thinks about such ridiculous matters the more time one is enabled to devote to practical purposes. Let us be practical now, dear Frederick. Are you aware of the state of our funds?"

"They must be low enough," said the baronet, gloomily; "that run of fourteen times upon the red at Homburg was enough to break the Bank of England."

"Well, dear Frederick, we are not the Bank of England—I wish to Heaven we were; wouldn't I show them how to rig the money market—and it certainly broke us. If we hadn't borrowed that five thousand francs from little Barre, on the strength of your noble name, we should have been stuck down there in pawn, and Heaven knows how long we should have remained there, for there is no money to be raised in England."

"How much of Barre's advance remains?" asked Sir Frederick.

"Just thirty pounds," said the doctor, after looking into his pocket-book. "We shall get out of this for five, as I will undertake to settle the bill for our friends up stairs—to save them trouble, you know, and will lump it in altogether, and that will just leave us five-and-twenty when we arrive in town. Five-and-twenty pounds doesn't go far in London, dear Frederick."

"It does not, indeed," said the baronet, in a despairing voice. "What on earth is to be done? Can you not think of anything?"

"Well, dear boy," said the doctor, drawing his chair nearer to his friend's, "it does not do for us to beat about the bush, or to hide anything from each other, and to tell you the truth, I have been thinking of something. Now, with regard to our dear friends up stairs, you may have observed that, during our three weeks' acquaintance with them, while you have been philandering and saying sweet nothings to the young lady, I have been paying great attention to the old one, partly in the cause of friendship, but partly, I blush to say, from a baser motive."

"Go on. What then?"

"That is all he says to me for my sacrifice," said the doctor; "but no matter. What then? Why, in the course of my intimacy with the old lady, I have discovered that, like most uneducated women who have been enriched at a late period of their lives, her sole happiness in having money is to spend it in the most lavish and preposterous manner."

"She need not go far to find two fitting objects for her bounty," said Frederick, sententiously.

"No," said the doctor; "but that is not at all in her line. She likes to spend it on herself,

and she does it. In Paris and in Rome, in Vienna and in Frankfort, in fact wherever she has been, she has been purchasing rings, bracelets, necklaces, and jewels of all kinds, to dear diamonds; and they are all in that bag which she invariably gives me to carry."

"Did she tell you they were there?"

"No, dear Frederick, but I know they are, because I have seen them. When the old girl was asleep in that journey between Geneva and Paris, I took the liberty of lifting her gold key from her watch chain, and opening the bag with it. Then I saw them all in their white satin-lined cases; heavens, glorious sight!"

"Then what does all this lead to, pray?" asked the baronet, with a yawn.

"Well, dear Frederick, my idea was this: When we arrive at Charing Cross to-morrow morning, we see these worthy people into a cab, and you go off with them to the Langham; I remain to take care of the luggage, and an hour and a half afterwards I arrive at the Langham with all the luggage except Mrs. Adams's little bag. I am white as death—I am very good at making up my face—I can scarcely articulate—I remember quite enough of anatomy to simulate rigor of the tongue, and tremble all over. 'What is the matter?' 'The bag! Is it here?' 'No.' 'Great heavens! I will devote my life to searching for it!' And I go off. Letters are received from me from Boulogne, St. Petersburg, Pesth, Bucharest, Indianapolis, and Baggleboro, Pa., but I never come back. Meantime I take the diamonds to our old friend Schaub, at Amsterdam; they are broken up in the usual way, and you and I have rather a fine time upon the proceeds."

"Bah!" said his companion; lighting a fresh cigar. "You were always a fool, Dick; but never, even out of your idiotic brain, did a proposition spring so preposterous as that which you have just broached. You have done as many bad things as I have, committed as many crimes, and worse crimes, I have no doubt, if all were known—but you have never suffered for them as I have. You have never been found out—or, at least, only half found out—you have never been sent to jail—how my flesh creeps at the mere mention of the word! I see the long stone corridors, the cold, slippery staircases, like serpents winding themselves up to the roof, the blank, whitewashed walls! I hear the dull, measured tramp of the warder's feet, the rattle of the bolt as it shoots in the lock, the solemn clanging of the chapel bell rousing one perhaps from the dreamland of hope to the gloomy horrors of conscience, to the knowledge that another day of misery has begun! I feel again that desperate sinking of the soul, that conviction that I am worldly dead to all outward influences of happiness and joy! that haunting horror that I shall be actually dead before the time of my release arrives; that I shall never again see the bright sun beaming on the fields, the brilliant lines of gaslight, with the busy population moving among them; never hear the sound of laughter, never look upon merry faces. Good God! the mere recollection of all this is enough to drive me mad!"

He shuddered as he spoke, and covered his face with his hands.

Dick Phillimore looked at him with strange curiosity. "You are quite right, dear Frederick," said he. "All the things that you have mentioned are confoundingly unpleasant, to say nothing of being deprived of one's smoke, made to wear ill-cut garments, and being put upon a light and wholesome but scarcely appetizing farinaceous diet, the product of Oswego, which I am given to understand is a thriving city belonging to our American cousins, or the porridge of Scotland, does not make up for the enforced absence of a tender steak, and a bottle of Muir's dry! As you say, dear Frederick, I have never experienced any of these things, nor do I quite understand why you have imported this unpleasant element into the conversation."

"Because you seem to have forgotten the chances of detection in this preposterous scheme of yours. You would know all about

them soon enough, supposing you failed to get clear off with your booty, or were detected even when you had disposed of it. No, Dick, no; we must and we will have money, but we will get it in a very different manner, very different, and much safer than the insane scheme which you propose."

"We will, dear boy, we will, by all means," said Dick Phillimore, taking a long pull, which emptied his tumbler, and ringing the bell; "but how?"

"It shall be duly provided for us by those from whom you intended to obtain it by force," said the baronet. "When the waiter has attended to your summons, I will give you the details."

The waiter answered the bell, and soon reappeared, bearing two huge jorums of the steaming mixture.

When he had taken his departure, Sir Frederick turned to his friend and said:

"Did you do what I told you in reference to pumping this Yankee as to his fortune?"

"Sucked him as dry as the oil well out of which he got his money, and afterwards sold to his brother-in-law, dear boy," said Dick Phillimore, with an engaging smile. "For it was out of oil he got it. Ten years ago our friend, Hiram P., was in a small way, and kept—a dry goods store, as he calls it—something equivalent to our linen draper's shop, I suppose in Titusville, Pennsylvania. He was doing sufficiently badly, when a friend of his, Colonel Drake, of Connecticut, arrived at Titusville and commenced to bore for oil. He took Hiram P. into his confidence, and they worked away together, but they had a mighty hard time of it; had to send fifty miles every time their tools wanted repair; but they persevered, and at length struck 'ile.' It was a splendid vein, and in a little while they were pumping out of it at the rate of from thirty-five to forty barrels per day. Hiram P. had a share in this, and he had fortunately previously secured a bit of land in the neighborhood, which he 'prospected' on his own account, and which turned out almost equally good. He did not launch out, did Hiram P., but went on living in his usual quiet, modest way, amassing bit by bit, until he had accumulated something like two hundred thousand dollars; that is to say, between forty and fifty thousand pounds. Then, like a sensible man, he thought he had had enough of lubrication, sold his lot and plant to his brother-in-law, who blew his own head off in despair a year afterwards, and came quietly down to New York. There was a swindle on there at that time, as there usually is—a 'corner,' as they call it—and Hiram P. having a shrewd head of his own, and good advice from his friends, went down into Wall Street and operated successfully. In the course of three months he had nearly doubled his capital, and then he withdrew, meaning to buy what he calls 'an elegant house up-town,' and take his daughter, to whom he has given an excellent education, into society. But Mrs. A., who, as you may perceive, is a woman of ambition, determined on coming to Europe, and it was during this tour we had the good fortune to meet them."

"You may well say good fortune," said Sir Frederick, puffing at his cigar. "A hundred thousand pounds isn't a bad sum to play with, Master Dick."

"No, indeed," said Dick Phillimore.

"Better, still, to have the interest of it to spend."

"Safer," said Dick, with a wink, "for such fellows as you and I, who have a fatal habit of not finding the interest sufficient and digging into the capital."

"Exactly," said Sir Frederick. "Now I intend to have the interest of that money at my disposal."

"Noblest of men," cried Dick, with an appreciative nod, "but how do you intend to get it?"

"You addle-pated old fool, I have been arranging for it for the last six weeks, and it is just ready to drop into my mouth."

"The deuce it is!" cried Dick in astonishment. "How so?"

"Why, while you were dancing round the mother, and worrying your old brain in endeavoring to see how you could rob her of her diamonds, I was planning to get hold of a more valuable jewel than any of them, her daughter."

"Ay, ay," said Dick. "I knew you were making great running with the young lady; but even supposing you managed to persuade her to run off with you, how would that bring you any nearer the money?"

"Run off with me!" cried Sir Frederick, scornfully. "I intend to marry her."

"To marry her?"

"To marry her with her parents' consent. What do you think of that for a scheme?"

"Well, it sounds well enough," said Dick Phillimore, rubbing his fat chin thoughtfully; "but," he added, after a pause, looking up at his companion with a queer glance, "but what about Kitty?"

Sir Frederick's pale face flushed a deep-bronzed red, and as he knit his brows heavily, his forehead became indented with parallel crimson bars. He was silent for a few minutes, then withdrawing his right hand from his pocket tossed it lightly in the air. "What about Kitty?" he repeated. "Well, Kitty has been too well trained, and she has my welfare too thoroughly at heart to dream of standing between me and its accomplishment."

"You think so, do you, Fred?" said Dick Phillimore, doubtfully. "Kitty is devoted to you, body and soul, I know that; but she is a woman, recollect, after all, and I don't think she would stand another woman slipping into the place which is lawfully hers, and which she has occupied so long."

"Oh! don't you?" said his friend. "Well, I do. Time will show; but if she does not with a good grace, she must be made to, that's all."

He set his teeth savagely as he said this, and looked so fierce and determined, that Dick Phillimore thought it best to change the subject.

"Well, we shall see," he said, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fire; "there is plenty of time to decide about that, and the plan is a good one as it stands. Meantime, it's agreed upon between us, I suppose, that if it does come off, we share the proceeds—honor among!"

"Thank you," said Sir Frederick, interrupting him, and rising from his chair, "you may spare me the pleasure of hearing the concluding word."

CHAPTER IV.

MINNIE'S LOVERS.

THE sun was shining brightly one brisk autumnal morning about three weeks after the occurrences just related, when Dick Phillimore, stepping jauntily along Jermyn street, St. James's stopped at the private door of a house, the lower portion of which was occupied as a bootmaker's shop, and rapped thereon loudly and consequentially.

Although for many nights previously Dick had not retired to rest until the small hours, and until he had partaken of an amount of drink and tobacco, considerably above the average, there were no traces of excess in his personal appearance. His face was plump and rosy, his eyes bright, his step light and free. His taste being somewhat gorgeous, he was arrayed in a blue body-coat, buttoned tightly across his chest, and a pair of cross-bar pantaloons; on his head he wore a new shiny hat with a bell crown and a curled brim, and as he stood on the doorstep waiting to be let in, he whistled a lively air, and looked as if he had not a care in the world.

When the door was opened, Dick inquired of the servant whether Sir Frederick was yet up, and receiving an answer in the negative, he entered the little hall, bounded briskly up the stairs, and walking into the sitting-room on the first floor, without the formality of knocking, threw himself into the arm-chair, and lighting

a cigar, stretched out his legs, and commenced to survey the apartment.

It was not a very large room, although it was lit by two windows looking on to the street, but was perfectly cosy and comfortable, and excellently furnished; the walls were covered with looking-glass, and pictures representing various scenes in the hunting field, there were sofas and ottomans and lounges, there was a side-board on which was a silver stand containing spirit decanters, a few soda water bottles, some full and some empty; and some tumblers containing the dregs of the last night's potations.

The table in the middle of the room was littered with the fragments of the dessert and with plates containing the butt ends of smoked cigars, a quantity of their ashes, and a pack of playing cards stewn in disorder about.

On one of the sofas lay a heavy overcoat, just as it had been carelessly flung there, and an opera hat with one of the springs broken, and a pair of lavender kid gloves soiled and split.

Dick Phillimore shook his head slowly as he surveyed this scene.

"Like master, like man," he muttered to himself; "Fred's fast asleep in there, and his servant, Foster, knowing that if he were left to himself he would not awake for an hour or so, hasn't even troubled himself to put the room tidy. They seem to have had a fine time of it last night, if one may judge from what is left. Cards, of course! Fred couldn't get through an evening without them—I wonder whether he lost or won! Not that it matters much; for, unless something very miraculous comes off, the game here will soon be at an end, and we shall have to make our way back to the continent, or perhaps to America or Australia, where the baronet's title may still help us in picking up a few flats and carrying on for a time. Now let me try and rouse him up to a state of consciousness."

He left his chair, and, crossing the floor, opened the inner door and looked into the room beyond.

The apartment was furnished as a bed-room, and beyond it was a bath, and a dressing-table, on which were arranged all the appliances for the toilet—silver-mounted bottles containing essences and perfumes, and ivory-back brushes, each duly marked with a crest and monogram; a suit of evening clothes was hung upon one of the chairs; boots and slippers were strewn about the floor, while upon the table, by the bedside, lay a handsome watch and chain, some bank-notes, and some loose gold and silver coin mixed together.

On the bed, half dressed, lay Sir Frederick Randall. He was asleep and dreaming, but it was apparently no pleasant vision that haunted his slumbers, for ever and anon his forehead would be marked with that peculiar expression which always followed the contraction of his brows, and he would grind his teeth and clench his hands, and moaningly muttered half-formed words.

Dick Phillimore stepped up to the bedside and looked down upon his friend.

"Fred has got the nightmare," he said to himself, "and he is not very pretty to look at when he is in that condition. He must have won, too, last night," he added, turning over the notes and money with his fingers. "Now, if I had had such a haul as that, my slumber would have been as peaceful as that of an innocent child. Hallo!" he cried, as the sleeper tossed restlessly on his couch, and ground his teeth more audibly, "this must not be permitted to go on. Here, wake up, Fred! What's the matter with you, old man?" and bending down to shake his friend roughly by the shoulder.

The touch, at first, had not the intended effect; for Sir Frederick, with his eyes still closed, called out: "Hands off—don't touch her—let her sink—let her sink, I say!" Then, gradually becoming conscious, he sat up and looked with amazement to see Dick seated by his bedside.

"What's the matter with you, Fred?" said

his companion with a jolly laugh. "Who is to sink—who is not to be touched—what is it all about?"

"I was dreaming," said Sir Frederick, rubbing his eyes. "I thought that Kitty and I were out in a boat together, and that the boat upset and she was thrown into the water."

"And a very rough time she would have had of it, if whoever you were talking to had followed your advice," said Dick. "You told them to let her sink, and"—

"Nonsense," cried Sir Frederick, angrily; "you could not have heard me rightly; that is your confounded mistake! What o'clock is it?"

"Nearly twelve, dear boy; I suppose you were up late last night? You seem to have made a good evening's work of it," he said, pointing to the money on the table.

"Pretty well, considering," said Sir Frederick. "Haviland and Crawshaw dined here, and we played *ecarte* after dinner, and I lost money to both of them; but later on we went into Moss's and had some hazard and roulette, and my luck must have changed, for at one time I nearly broke the bank, and though I lost some of it again, I came away carrying what you see there."

"What I see there is one hundred and twenty-five pounds," said Dick Phillimore, carefully counting the notes and gold. "A nice little sum to carry us on for a week, but not enough, dear Fred—nothing like enough, I'm afraid, to gild the pill which I have brought with me for you to swallow."

"What is it?" said Sir Frederick, looking anxiously at him. "Not bad news?"

"Very bad news," replied Dick; "so bad, that I must take a little brandy and soda-water to fortify me in breaking it to you."

He went into the sitting-room, and returning shortly after, bearing a tumbler of the foaming beverage, seated himself by the bedside.

"You know, dear Fred, I am one of those old-fashioned fellows who always like to take time by the forelock, and to be as much prepared as possible for any contingency that may arise; so, knowing that our joint bill for five hundred pounds would be due in about three weeks, I thought I would just look in upon Samson, who holds it, and ask him to renew it for another three months."

"You could not have done anything more stupid," growled Sir Frederick; "that was just the way to awake their suspicions."

"Of course," retorted Dick Phillimore, "according to you I never do anything that is not stupid; but I did it for the best, and I am still glad I went."

"What did Samson say?"

"Samson said that he would not renew it for another minute, and that he is tired of being put off. If the bill is not paid when it is due, he will put into effect the judgment he holds over you, and you will be arrested the next day."

"The deuce!" cried Sir Frederick. "And do you think he will do this?"

"I am sure he will," said Dick; "Samson is a strong man, and we have not found out the proper party to cut his hair. He means mischief, dear Fred; and depend upon it, you will have to suffer."

"And why not you, pray; your name is also on the bill?"

"Yes, dear Fred, but I am not worth powder and shot. I'm not a swell baronet, with the chance of drawing on his title in the matrimonial or some other market. I am only a poor devil, who, if I were in prison, means stay there and do nothing; whereas, being out in the world I have a chance of looking about me, and picking up a little money at cards and billiards and betting, and thus earning enough to pay Samson his interest. No, sir, he will leave me alone; but he will go in for you, you may depend upon it."

"He shall not have the chance," said Sir Frederick, suddenly sitting upright in the bed.

"You mean to say you will bolt before the bill is due?"

"Nothing of the kind. I mean to say that the money shall be paid. I don't promise it within three weeks, mind; but if I can give a good guarantee to Samson, make it clear to him that it is all right, and that he will have it, he would hold it over for a short time."

"Do you?" said Dick, doubtfully; "but how you are going to get the money I cannot see—but by betting; there is only the Liverpool steeple chase to come off now, and your book on that is as bad as it well could be; you will lose upon that rather than win."

"How I shall get the money is my business; you don't care, I suppose, so long as you're all right?"

"Not the least in the world, dear Fred; I am by no means proud. So long as I have a clean shirt on my back, and a pound in my pocket, I don't care who pays for them; but I am curious to know how it is to be managed, nevertheless."

"Are you?" said Sir Frederick, with a jeering laugh. "Well, then, I don't mind telling you. The money with which Samson is to be paid, and on which I intend to live like a prince for the rest of my life, is to come from the place where fortunes are more quickly made and more spent than anywhere else in the world."

"And where is that, pray?"

"America, dear Phillimore, the land of dollars. I mean our Yankee friend Adams to pay my debts and support me."

"Don't you try to get hold of the old man at cards," said Dick, shaking his head; "he taught me some confounded game called 'poker' or 'euchre,' or something, and won sovereigns off me before I knew where I was."

"Don't be afraid, Dick," said Sir Frederick, laughing; "I will teach him a better game than that."

"You are not thinking of what you mentioned to me at the hotel at Folkestone, the night of our first landing?" asked Dick.

"I am," said his friend, "there is no other resource left."

"Then, again, I most earnestly bid you beware. I have been thinking it over seriously since, and what I told you about Kitty"—

"Leave Kitty to me," interrupted Sir Frederick. "So soon as I have put matters in train at the Langham Hotel, I will go down and see Kitty, and I have no doubt that I shall be easily able to win her over to my views."

"I hope you may," said Dick Phillimore, quietly. "Well, I will go now, for it is full time you were up and dressed. I will meet you at the club at dinner, at seven, for I shall be anxious to hear what progress you have made."

In little more than an hour afterwards, Sir Frederick Randall, dressed in excellent taste, and looking remarkably handsome, stepped into a cab, and ordered the driver to take him to the Langham Hotel.

"Just two o'clock," he said to himself, after referring to his watch. "I have timed matters admirably. The old people will have had their lunch, and will have started out again on one of those sight-seeing expeditions which afford them such delight, while Minnie, who is by no means of so curious a nature, and who, besides, may perhaps recollect that this is about the time when I usually pay my visits, will probably be at home and alone. I don't think I shall have much difficulty in carrying out my object, for the girl is good and honest, and is, I believe, in love with me for myself, and without any thought beyond; while the old people are so tickled with the notion of having a baronet's lady for their daughter, that they will interpose no objection. Once through with that I must then look after Kitty. I thought at one time that that would be an easy matter, but I have come round to Dick Phillimore's opinion, and fancy she may turn rusty. If she does—well, it's a desperate game to play, but with ruin staring me in the face there is no other way out of it."

The cab stopped at the door of the hotel, and after speaking to the hall-porter, Sir Fred-

rick was shown up to an elegant suite of rooms on the first floor.

On their first arrival in London, Mrs. Adams, having been assured that the Langham Hotel was the "first of style," had ordered her husband to take them there, and had insisted upon having the dearest and best apartments which could be obtained.

Hiram P. would have been content, as were some two or three hundred American citizens, of first-class position, to live in the public rooms, but his wife would not hear of it. They must have their parlor and their dining-saloon, and there must be a grand piano for Minnie, and they must be able to entertain their friends when they chose—not that they had any friends, either English or American, but, of course, Sir Frederick—everything was Sir Frederick with Mrs. Adams—would soon introduce them to elegant people, whom they must entertain.

So, although Sir Frederick, under the plea that there were no stylish people then in town, excused himself from introducing them to any of his friends, they were established in the fine rooms, and Mrs. Adams walked about surveying herself with great delight in the huge mirrors, and covering the beautiful brocaded sofas with large paper parcels, the results of her daily shopping.

Sir Frederick was not surprised, though he was very well pleased to hear that Mr. and Mrs. Adams had gone out, but that Miss Minnie was at home and would receive him.

Miss Minnie looked very charming as she rose from the sofa, on which she had been sitting, and advanced to meet her visitor with outstretched hand.

At the announcement of his name two little red signals of delight had come fluttering into her cheeks, and her eyes brightened with pleasure, and her slight girlish figure, which was eminently graceful, seemed to float along the floor, rather than walk across it.

Sir Frederick paused with something like amazement, as he marked this beautiful girl's approach; he thought he had never seen her look so pretty. (She was dressed in a close-fitting mauve-colored velvet jacket, with a flowing skirt.)

(Fortunately for herself, Minnie had not inherited her mother's love of display and eccentric taste in dress; nothing could be more simple than her costume.) She wore a plain linen collar and cuffs, the former fastened with a solid gold brooch, the latter clasped by plain gold studs, while a bright steel watch-chain, with pendant trifles, hung at the waist. On her hands, which were small and white, she wore but one ring, long oval in shape, composed of a single splendid emerald, set round with diamonds. She had been wise enough, too, to avoid falling into the fashion then prevalent among Englishwomen, of carrying an enormous chignon at the back of her head, and had even given up the little frizzed curls on her forehead, which had been her delight at home. Her fair, soft hair was now arranged in two plain braids, and at the back, woven into a tightly-plaited coronet, which admirably set off the classic outline of her small head.

"I am so sorry papa and mamma are out," were her first words after she had returned to the sofa, and Sir Frederick had established himself in an arm-chair close by her.

"You are so sorry, and I am so glad," said her visitor; "not," he added, looking up softly into her eyes, as he saw a wondering expression in her face, "not that I have anything but the kindest feeling for your parents; but that it is a great pleasure to me to find you alone."

"You are very good to say so, Sir Frederick," said Minnie, striving to repress a rising blush; "but indeed you are always good to me."

"On the contrary, it is I who have reason to be grateful to you," said he, drawing his chair nearer. "Do you know, Miss Adams, that life has been a very different thing to me since I first knew you?"

"Indeed!" said Minnie, looking down, "and how is that?"

"Before that happy time of our meeting at Homburg, everything seemed dull, insipid, and wanting in flavor. It was my own fault, I suppose. I had seen and done everything, as I supposed, and drained the cup to the dregs, but I then learned a pleasure above all others, which I had never experienced, that of the society of a lovely and innocent girl."

"You are laughing at me, I think," said Minnie, still looking down. "I am unaccustomed to such flattery, remember."

"This is no flattery," said Sir Frederick, earnestly, "it is only the simple truth. You cannot understand, Miss Adams, how soon a man grows tired of the companionship of mere women of the world. They are alike in everything, cut out of the same pattern, as it were, with the same thoughts and the same smiles, say the same silly things in the same trained voice. Now, about you there is a freshness of idea, and a freshness of voice, which is perfectly delightful."

"You must not speak about voice, Sir Frederick," said Minnie, smiling. "I know you think I speak in what you English people call a regular Yankee accent."

"And I know that I can listen to you for ever," said her visitor.

"I am afraid that the pleasure, if pleasure it really be, would soon pall upon you, and grow as monotonous as those amusements which you have already spoken of."

"Will you give me the chance of proving to you how wrong you are in that idea," said he, lowering his voice, and bending over her. "Will you give me the chance of proving how deep is my regard—my love for you—will you be my wife, Minnie?"

"Sir Frederick!"

"That is the question I came to ask you to-day; that is the question that has been trembling on my lips ever since my heart assured me that I was making no mistake; that I had at last met with the one whom I had been seeking so long."

The girl trembled and was silent for a few minutes.

"If I could only believe you," she said at length; "if I only thought you were telling the truth!"

"You can believe it, Minnie," he whispered. "for I am speaking to you in all sincerity. I have waited long to ask you this; what answer am I to receive?"

The girl was silent; keeping her eyes steadily fixed upon the floor.

Sir Frederick looked down at her, and if he had not been a villain, he would have been touched by the sight of the palpitating of her bosom, which was visible through her dress—by her maidenly modesty and confusion.

He was a villain; for he saw all this and heeded it not; merely smiling to himself and tossing his hand lightly in the air.

"You do not speak," he said, after a time. "You are not angry with me, Minnie?"

"Angry," she repeated, in a low voice, raising her eyes until they rested on his face; "how could I feel angry—how could I feel anything but honored at hearing such words from one so far above me in position."

"Position!" he cried. "The only store I set by my position is that it enables me to offer you something in some way worthy of you. The only care I have for it is that it enables me to share it with you."

"But have you reflected upon what you are doing? Do you know that my father, though rich now, was lowly born? That he is a self-made man, as, indeed, are all our citizens? Have you thought what your great friends would say if you married a girl like me, unknown to them, and unaccustomed to the ways of their society?"

"You will be a star among them, Minnie; and every one will be too glad to welcome you, and do you honor."

He took her hand as he said these words,

and she did not offer to withdraw it from his grasp.

"May I think you love me, Minnie?" he whispered, stealing his arm round her waist.

"Yes," she said simply, looking at him unabashed. "You may, indeed! I have loved you always, from the first hour I saw you."

"And you will marry me?"

"If you wish it," she replied.

He drew her closely to him, and pressed one long kiss on her lips.

"Spoken like my own sweet girl," he said. "Now then, I have one favor to ask you."

"You do not anticipate a denial, I suppose," said Minnie, with a smile.

"Well, it is not a great one," he replied; "it is only that you will abstain from mentioning what has passed between us to either of your parents for a few days."

A shade of disappointment stole over Minnie's face.

"May I not tell papa?" she said; "he is so fond of me, poor papa!"

"You must not breathe a word to him or to any one till I come back."

"Come back?"

"I have to leave London on business for a few days; but I could not go out of town until I had put this question to you and had your answer. Now, dearest, I shall go away in excellent spirits, and I do not think you need be assured that I shall hasten my return as quickly as possible; but until that return you must not say a word."

"Very well," she said with a little shrug of her shoulders; "I suppose it must be as you wish."

They sat together for some time after that, talking of such matters as people will discuss under similar circumstances, and then after a tender leave-taking, and a promise to return as soon as possible, Sir Frederick went away.

He passed down the grand staircase with a bright face and a light footstep. "Half of my task is successfully accomplished," he said to himself: but ere he reached the street his step grew slower and his face clouded over, as he muttered to himself, "Now for the other and more difficult half."

* * * * *

When Minnie Adams found herself alone, she fell into a deep and pleasant reverie.

In telling Sir Frederick Randall that she had fallen in love with him at first sight, she had spoken nothing but the truth, and she might have added that she had never loved before. True it was that a girl so beautiful and so accomplished could not, of course, have passed through even such a small modicum of society as had fallen to her lot, without attracting great attention, and without becoming entangled in a few harmless flirtations.

But in none of these had Minnie's heart been engaged. She liked to dance, to ride, to talk, or to sing with certain eligible young men; but when the pastime of the hour was ended, they passed completely out of her mind, and she never gave a thought to any one of them again. So that she was completely free and unwounded until she met with this fascinating English baronet, and subjugated by his good looks, his aristocratic appearance, and the elegance of his bearing and manner, she was prepared to yield up to him her heart, on which no other human being had ever made a serious impression.

No other human being? Well, she confessed to herself during her reverie she certainly had been very fond of Henry Willamette, but that was three or four years ago, when she was a mere child, not more than fourteen years old; and he was quite a youth at that period, much too young to think of marrying, at least according to the European views on that subject. And full of her new conquest, Minnie professed to herself her admiration of the rule which prescribes that the husband should be somewhat older than the wife.

"How silly it was of her and Harry," she thought, "ever to have talked of love! They

were but two children, who ought to have been punished for their precocity. And yet—and yet, how handsome Harry Willamette was, how chivalrous and noble in his bearing, what a perfect gentleman in the best acceptance of the word!"

She recollected how her heart had throbbed within her when she read of his deeds of daring in the war, when she heard him everywhere extolled for his personal bravery in the field, and the clearness of his intellect at the council fire.

Poor Harry! She had seen him once on the terrace at Homburg, while she was walking with Sir Frederick. He had recognized her, and seemed as though intending to approach her, but when he saw the company she was with, he merely raised his hat and passed by.

"What will Harry think of the news that I am going to marry this English aristocrat?" she wondered.

And just at that moment her reverie was broken in upon by the entrance of a servant, who handed her a card.

On the card was printed, "Colonel Henry B. Willamette."

Minnie started in astonishment. Her mind had been full of the boy who, so far away and so long ago, as it seemed to her, had been her playmate and her companion, and here he was seeking admission at her door.

"Show Colonel Willamette up instantly," said she; and the well-trained waiter hastened to obey her orders, returning in a few minutes and ushering in the new visitor.

A young man of about six-and-twenty, very little above the middle height, and of a slim and wiry build, with dark complexion and jet-black, curly hair; his features small and regular, his face shaven, with the exception of a thick, overhanging mustache: he had large, blue, melancholy eyes, fringed with long, dark lashes, and the general aspect of his countenance was intellectual and refined, grave and earnest.

His left coat-sleeve was empty, and was hooked on to his breast—the good limb which it used to contain had been splintered by a spent ball and rendered useless, as he was fighting by Meade's side at Gettysburg.

Colonel Willamette entered the room with a somewhat embarrassed air—so different, Minnie thought, from Sir Frederick's easy manner—and bowed to her politely but somewhat frigidly.

"This is a very unexpected, but very welcome visit, Colonel Willamette," said Minnie, advancing towards him and holding out her hand. "Pray be seated."

She pointed to a more distant chair, but the colonel, apparently unobservant of the gesture, dropped into the seat recently occupied by Sir Frederick.

"I had no idea you were in England," she continued. "When did you arrive?"

"But a day or two since," he replied. "I have been loitering at Vienna until I have nearly outstayed the holiday I had allotted to myself, and now I am on my way home."

"Home to New York?" she asked.

"To New York first," he replied with a grave smile, "but shall not stay there long, I shall push on to my old house on the Hudson, which I have so often described to you."

"And which is so close to the Catskills that I even pictured you as a youthful Rip Van Winkle in their gloomy recesses," said Minnie, laughing. "Why do you not take some one with you to enliven the solitude of that gloomy old house, colonel?"

"Take some one with me?" repeated the colonel.

"Yes; did you see no Viennese maiden with bright blue eyes, and a silver arrow stuck through her abundant black hair, with whom you could have fallen in love, and whom you could have persuaded to become the mistress of Crow's Nest?"

Colonel Willamette's expression was even more than usually grave, as he said:

"I am sufficiently American to prefer my

own countrywomen to foreigners, Miss Adams. If I can get no American lady to share my lot, I guess Crow's Nest will remain without a mistress during my lifetime."

"I would advise you not to lay down any such strict rule, colonel," said Minnie, playfully, "as you will, no doubt, depart from it. Why not, for instance, delay your return, and remain here; our English cousins are very lovely and very domestic, and I should think you would not have much difficulty in finding one exactly suited to your tastes."

"Do you know what you are doing?" said Colonel Willamette, suddenly rising from his chair and approaching her; "do you understand the amount of torture you are thus heedlessly inflicting on me? No," he said after a pause, "you do not, for you are still a mere child, and too good, and too pure, willingly to hurt any one."

"I am very sorry," said Minnie Adams, looking at him in surprise. "I assure you that it was merely jesting, that I had no idea of wounding your feelings."

"Of course you would not, how should you?" said the colonel, shaking his head, "and yet, child as you were, as you are even now, you have sufficient womanly penetration to enable you to guess my secret. Miss Adams, I was bred a soldier, and nothing, I suppose, will ever rid me of the bluntness and outspokenness of my profession, hence my visit to you to-day. Years ago, when you and I played together as children, though I was much the elder, I conceived an affection for you which I have never been able to shake off; it has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength, despite the utmost efforts which, not knowing it would be acceptable to you, I made to stifle it; but all was in vain. I thought at one time I had conquered it, for it lay dormant for months, until I met you last summer at Homburg, then it burst forth with renewed fury. There—there are circumstances about that meeting which made me particularly desirous to forget you, but it was not to be; your image has haunted me ever since, and now, before I return home, I have come to ask you whether there is any chance of what has been the dream of my whole life, being accomplished?"

He paused and looked eagerly at her, with earnest, strained gaze, and quivering lips.

Minnie met that gaze firmly, though her voice was tremulous in its tone, as she replied:

"Harry, for I must call you by the old familiar name, I am deeply pained to hear the words you have just spoken; believe me, I had no idea of this, when I teased you just now, but I have never had an idea of the existence of any such feeling on your part since we were childish friends. The feeling I entertained for you in those days, Harry, I entertain still. I have a very deep regard for you, and I would be to you as your sister—but nothing more!"

"Nothing more!" he repeated, with a hollow voice.

"Nothing more," she said. "Believe me, dear Harry, it pains me to say this to you, seeing the effect it has upon you, but it would be worse than idle to give you hopes which could never be realized."

Instantly the colonel's face grew black as night.

"Is there," he exclaimed, passionately, "is there any one else who is preferred—I beg your pardon, Miss Adams," he added, stopping himself by a violent effort, "I have no right to ask you any questions."

"I quite agree with you, Colonel Willamette," said Minnie, with dignity, "it is time that this painful interview was brought to an end."

She rose from her chair as she spoke, and the colonel bowed and retreated towards the door. Then suddenly turning, he came swiftly back.

"In what I last said," he exclaimed, "I was a fool, and worse than a fool; but what I said to you before was God's truth. You have been the one sole thought of my life, and you will continue to be so, for what has passed between us to-day, and the decision you have

given me, though it may alienate you from me, cannot lessen you in my love! Minnie, no matter what comes to you, my love will endure to the day of my death, and if you have any happy remembrances of the old days, I will ask you to give me one promise."

"And that is"—

"And that is, if ever you should want my assistance—no matter where you may be, or in what way you may require it—you will not hesitate to send for me."

"I promise," said Minnie, giving him her hand.

He pressed it for an instant between his own, then respectfully raised it to his lips and went silently away.

CHAPTER V.

KITTY.

THE shades of evening were falling fast upon the village of Brauxholme, and the wide space of ocean which lay at its feet was blushing red in the departing rays shed by the declining sun ere he sank beneath the waves. Brauxholme is a fishing village on the Devonshire coast, a cluster of houses swarming up the side, and overhanging the top of a huge cliff.

Beyond the fishermen and their families, there is little regular population, the few more pretentious cottages being occupied by the clergyman, the doctor, and some quiet-going people, mostly elderly, who have settled there, either for the sake of the seclusion or for the cheapness of the living.

No place in a civilized and densely-populated country like England, could well be more secluded. It is ten miles from any railway, and the only communication it has with the world is by means of the carrier's wagon, which three times weekly jogs over to the market-town and thence brings such letters and parcels as may be awaiting its arrival.

An event which had happened during the summer of this year seemed, however, destined to work a revolution in the fortunes of the place.

A famous London physician, whose wife was in delicate health, which above all things required perfect quiet and pure fresh air for its treatment, chanced to hear of Brauxholme, from one of his fashionable patients, a noble lord, whose country seat was in the neighborhood, and ran down to visit the spot.

He found it so exactly suitable for his purpose, that he determined to bring his wife thither at once. The great difficulty, that of providing her with suitable accommodation, being met by an offer on the part of the clergyman of the parish, a venerable man, whose wife had died about two years previously, and who on hearing the state of the case, was willing to place a portion of the vicarage at the disposal of the invalid.

Dr. Travers assented gratefully to this proposition.

There was another objection.

Mrs. Travers required careful nursing, and though the doctor's fortune was sufficient to have enabled him to retire from practice, yet he took such interest in his profession that his wife was unwilling he should give it up for the sake of attending to her in a place so ungenial to his tastes.

The old woman who acted as housekeeper and general servant at the vicarage, being stupid, as well as feeble, was clearly unfitted for the task.

What then, was to be done? The plan which promised so well was nearly falling through, until the vicar bethought him of Mrs. Moreton.

Who was Mrs. Moreton?

Mr. Harvey, the old vicar, on being appealed to, could hardly say.

She was a very nice young woman—quite a lady, very pretty, and wonderfully kind to children and to the poor. She had been in the village about eighteen months, and during that time had rendered herself beloved by all, by her kindness and sympathy.

She had had some experience in nursing, too; for last year, when a case of small-pox had

been brought into the village, from a foreign fishing boat which anchored there, and when all else were frightened to tend the poor stricken wretch, who was placed in an outhouse by himself, with only the infirmity doctor to visit him, Mrs. Morton no sooner heard of it, than she took up her place by the sick man's bedside, and never left him until he was out of danger.

"That was bright," the doctor thought, "and showed an amount of heart and a determined will."

"Was she married?"

"Oh, yes," Mr. Harvey said; "but there was something—he did not know what it was—which caused her to live by herself. Mr. Moreton was, he believed, engaged in some business which kept him greatly from his home."

He had never visited Brauxholme since Mrs. Moreton had resided there.

At all events, whatever might be between them, Mr. Harvey was perfectly certain that it was not Mrs. Moreton's fault; for a sweeter and better woman did not breathe.

Dr. Travers was a man of the world, and though he smiled at the vicar's earnest simplicity, he could fully understand that Mrs. Moreton might be as good as was represented, and yet have valid reason for living apart from her husband.

Accompanied by the vicar, he walked round to the little cottage where she resided, and had an interview with the lady, the result of which was, that he came away almost as much infatuated as his elderly companion.

When Mrs. Moreton had the circumstances of the case explained to her, she expressed herself delighted to be of any assistance in a matter in which restoration to health was concerned; but decidedly and promptly declined to take any remuneration for her trouble.

She would be amply repaid, she said, if Mrs. Travers's recovery was in any way due to her services; and she was so determined, and withal, so ladylike on this point, that Dr. Travers saw it useless to press it further.

So Mrs. Travers came to Brauxholme, and was duly installed in the vicarage, and was duly tended by Mrs. Moreton, for whom she conceived a deep and lasting affection.

"She is the sweetest and most lovable creature in the world," Mrs. Travers wrote to her husband; "and what is more, a perfect lady, well educated, and of excellent manners. I do not think her life is a happy one; she is laboring under some great trouble; but she does not venture any confidence, and of course I cannot attempt to pry into her domestic affairs. She never speaks of her husband; but I fear, from two or three observations, which she has unwittingly dropped, that he is a bad man. How many women have bad husbands. Ah, Walter, how happy ought I to be in mine!"

Dr. Travers came down from time to time during the summer to pass two or three days with his wife, and saw enough of Mrs. Moreton to be satisfied that the praises bestowed upon her were not undeserved.

Mrs. Travers remained in Brauxholme until late in the autumn, when her husband fetched her back to London completely cured of all symptoms of her illness.

On parting with Mrs. Moreton, the doctor presented her with a valuable diamond bracelet, worth several hundred pounds.

"This is a present from myself and my wife, dear Mrs. Moreton, and you must not refuse to accept it. It may seem strange to you that, knowing your simple taste and habits of life, I should have chosen such a souvenir, but to be candid with you, though I know nothing of your position or your means, I have an idea that you might one day be in need of money, and you will then find this bracelet very useful. Merely for a temporary purpose, of course, for I trust that with the intimate relations on which we have been living, and the deep obligation you have laid us under, you would not hesitate to apply to me in any time of need."

In the calm evening twilight, on the day

that Doctor and Mrs. Travers had taken their departure, the old vicar, Mr. Harvey, walked down the village street, and striking off up a narrow side lane that led to the cliff, stopped before a low, one-storied, whitewashed cottage that stood by itself without another human habitation near, overlooking the widespread ocean below.

The vicar unlatched the wicket gate and passing through a little garden, which even at this sad time of the fall of the leaf seemed well laid out and neatly kept, rapped with his stick at the cottage door.

It was opened by a young girl about sixteen years old, with a bright, intelligent face.

Immediately on recognizing the visitor the girl's eyes brightened, she gave a sharp cry indicative of pleasure, but uttered no words.

The old vicar smiled and patted her shining head approvingly. Then, pointing to the inner room, went through a rapid pantomimic action.

The girl replied in the same way, but even more rapidly.

It was her only means of communication with the world, for she was deaf and dumb.

Nodding his head and again smiling at her, Mr. Harvey passed by the girl, and entering the little sitting-room found himself confronted by a woman, who suspended her task of dusting the little ornaments scattered here and there with a feather brush which she held in her hand to bid him welcome.

Sweet-looking was the term most applicable to this woman, for her features were not regular, and her charm lay in her expression.

Her eyes were large and gray, her nose a little too thick for classic beauty, her mouth somewhat large, with full lips, and small, wholesome-looking, white teeth. She was about the average height, and as she drew herself up, with one hand holding back the truant dark hair, which had escaped from its knot and was straying about her shoulders, and the other extended in welcome, she towered considerably above the vicar, who, never very tall, was now shrunken by age.

"I thought you would come to see me to-day," she said in a soft, clear voice; "but I had almost given up expecting you, and you find me literally almost up to my elbows in work."

"You have been so long away from home, Mrs. Moreton, that I suppose you found things all in confusion."

"No, indeed. Poor Hannah is the cleanest and most industrious creature possible; but there are, of course, certain things which she cannot be expected to do, and which I, in my few minutes' daily visit here, have not had leisure to attend to."

"You will have leisure enough now, Mrs. Moreton," said the vicar, smiling.

"Yes, indeed; I already miss our dear friend very much, and what it will be when the winter comes on, I cannot bear to imagine."

"You will have the satisfaction of thinking that the health which Mrs. Travers will be enjoying, will, under Providence, be mainly due to your kind attention to her."

"It will be a great consolation to know that I was of use," said Mrs. Moreton, quietly. "Dr. Travers was anxious that I should go and stay with them in London during the winter, but I told them that it was impossible."

"Impossible! And why? This is always a dull place in the winter, my dear, and this year you will find it duller than ever—why not accept the invitation, and go?"

"It would be impossible," she repeated. "I cannot go."

"Well," said the vicar, mildly, "you are the best judge of your own affairs, my dear, though I should be sorry enough to lose you, and it was only for your own good that I endeavored to persuade you to go."

They talked a little more of village matters, and then the old vicar bade his friend good night, and walked out into the dark night.

Mrs. Moreton remained at the door watching

his retreating figure as long as he could see it, and then returned to her room. She and the vicar had been conversing by the fire there, and darkness had come on rapidly, and it was time to light the candle.

She was taking a match in her hand for that purpose, when her attention was attracted by a low tapping on the window glass.

She paused and listened. The tapping came again.

She stooped to the window, and raising it a little, said: "What is wanted? Who is there?"

"'Tis I, Kitty; be quick and open the door!"

At the sound of the voice she placed her hand to her heart, and staggered as though she had been shot.

"Be quick, Kitty," came the whispered voice again; "don't you hear, 'tis I?"

With a great effort she recovered her self-possession and opened the street door.

The next moment a man entered with a felt hat slouched over his eyes, and a heavy overcoat wrapped about him.

Throwing these off, he stood revealed by the flickering firelight as Sir Frederick Randall.

CHAPTER VI.

'HUSBAND AND WIFE.'

THE first thing Sir Frederick Randall did, after ridding himself of his encumbering wraps, was to step to the door and turn the key in it.

"You need not be afraid, Frederick," said Kitty, looking at him in sorrowful surprise; "there is no one here to intrude upon you."

"No one," he muttered, turning round to her. "You have a servant, have you not? You don't live in this place by yourself?"

"I have a servant," Kitty replied; "but if you recollect, I wrote to you that she was deaf and dumb."

"So you did," he said, with a short laugh. "That was a deucedly clever move of yours, Kitty, to take a dummy of that kind. It is not often one has the chance of getting such a trustworthy person as that about them."

"It was not done out of those motives, Fred," said Kitty, with a grave smile, "but merely out of charity."

"Anyhow, it comes to the same thing," said Sir Frederick, gruffly; "but dummy can see if she cannot hear, and it's as well to keep her out. Let me get near the fire and warm myself a bit; there is a sharp wind rising, and I was getting confoundedly cold waiting outside. I looked in at the window two or three times, and I thought that old fool would never go."

"Hush, Fred, hush! You must not speak of Mr. Harvey in that way; he is my kindest and best friend, the clergyman, here, of whom I have written to you so often."

"I wish he had chosen any other time to pay his visit to you, that's all," said Sir Frederick.

"Well," he continued, holding her at arm's length, "how are you, and how are you getting on? You are looking bright and bonny as usual, Kitty. That mad and philanthropic scheme of going out to nurse some one, and of which you wrote to me, does not seem to have done you any harm."

"No, I don't think I'm any the worse for it," said Kitty, cheerfully; "a little tired, perhaps, that's all."

"Oh, one must not mind that," said he, leaning back in the chair and stretching out his legs before the fire. "I suppose you had your meals every day with these people, didn't you, for you have not written for any money lately for household bills? And it was a deuced good thing you didn't, for I hadn't any to send you."

"Are matters still going badly with you, then, Fred?" said Kitty, taking her chair beside him, laying her hand upon his knee, and looking up anxiously into his face.

"About as badly as they well could," he replied.

"This trip to the continent, from which you have just returned, did you no good, then?" she asked.

"None; I rather lost by it than otherwise, if that could be said of a man who has nothing to lose. However, we will talk about these matters afterwards. I have come over expressly to talk them over with you. Now tell me about yourself."

"There is not much to tell, Fred, though I have something which I think will be a pleasant surprise to you, but I will keep that until later. What an age, since I saw you! The last time was in the spring, when you sent for me to meet you at Exeter, and I should not have seen you then, I suppose, if you had not been obliged to come down to some races in the neighborhood."

"Don't grumble, Kitty," he said, savagely; "I hate being grumbled at!"

"I am not grumbling, dear," she said, drawing her chair close beside him, and putting her arm through his. "I was only thinking what a curious life ours is. However, to return to what I was saying. For the last four months I have passed nearly every day and night at the vicarage, attending upon Mrs. Travers, realising to her and nursing her."

"You're a great sight too good-natured, Kitty, making yourself a servant in that way—you ought to have been well paid for such work as that."

"I should have been more than paid by their kindness to me. Mrs. Travers and the doctor could not say too much in my praise, and they were as affectionate and as loving in their manner to me as if I had been their own sister."

"Affectionate ways don't cost much," growled Sir Frederick.

"No," said Kitty, rising and going into the inner room, "but they gave me more substantial proofs of their regard. What do you think of this, Fred?" she cried returning with a small leather case, and placing it in his hand.

"Goodness, Kitty!" he exclaimed, as he opened it, and his gaze fell upon the bracelet inside.

"Where did you get this from?"

"Dr. Travers gave it to me," she said. "Is it not handsome?"

"Handsome!" cried Sir Frederick. "It must be worth nearly three hundred pounds, I should say. Don't you think," he added, looking shifflily up at her, "don't you think it is rather unwise of you to keep a valuable thing like this in this lonesome spot?"

She looked anxiously at him for a moment, then burst into a forced laugh.

"Lonesome!" she cried. "It may strike you as lonesome, but I think nothing of it. All the people about here know me, and no one would dream of doing me any harm."

"Then you don't think it would be safer for me to take care of it for you?"

Then marking the changed expression of her face, he added:

"Well, perhaps you are the best judge of such matters; and no doubt you would like to keep it by you, to look at now and then. It will gratify your woman's vanity!"

"Put it down to that, Fred," she said, with a half-pained expression, and a slight shrug of her shoulders. "Anyhow, let me keep it for the present. I have so few things of my own."

"Oh, keep it, by all means," he said, viciously poking at the fire; "don't mind me, I'm nobody, leave me to slave myself to death; that's no matter of yours."

"Oh, Fred, my own darling husband," cried Kitty, throwing her arms round him, and falling upon his neck, "how can you speak to me in that way—how can you reproach me so cruelly? Haven't I given up everything in the world that makes life attractive, society, friends, home, all for your sake, and do you think I would care to keep a few paltry jewels

if you wanted them? When you first came courting me, down at my father's little farm in Surrey, and asked me to be your wife, you told me it must all be kept a secret because of your uncle. Well, we were married, and six months afterwards your uncle died, and you told me it must still be kept a secret, for some reason, I could never understand why, and here we are living on in this wretched way separated and apart—you gaining your livelihood—do not think I mean to be harsh, but it is the truth—in a manner which is not fit for a gentleman of your position; I dwelling here in an assumed name with no one knowing whether I am wife or widow."

"I thought you were tolerably contented with it," he said.

"Did you?" she cried, her face brightening. "I am glad of that, because that shows I cannot have grumbled very much. But, oh, Fred, I have so longed to change it all—and do you know, Fred, as I sat over the fire last evening I felt to myself as though a change were coming."

"Did you?" said he, in a low voice, looking furtively at her. "How was that?"

"I don't know how it was," she replied; "but I felt as though things were not going to be exactly as they have been for some time past; and do you know what I thought?"

"No; how could I possibly tell?"

"I thought that the next time I saw you—and of course I had no idea it would be so soon—that I would say to you, let us change all this; the life we are both leading is a wretched one. Year by year we are growing older, and there is no prospect of a change, unless we strike out boldly ourselves. Let us leave England, and begin life again in a fresh place. The sale of this bracelet will bring money to pay our passage and to give us a new start in life. There is no need of you to keep your title, which has never been any use, but only an incumbrance to you; and you have plenty of talent, which will enable you to make a career in any walk of life you may choose. Let us do this, Fred, for God's sake; and get quit of this wretched existence we are leading!"

"And where do you propose that we should go to?" he asked.

"To America, Fred; I have been reading all about it in some books and newspapers which Mrs. Travers lent me, and talking about it with the doctor himself. He knows several Americans, and they all say that if people only go out there with determination and patience, they are sure to get on well."

"Tell me, Fred," she added, raising herself from his shoulder and looking earnestly into his eyes, "will you think of it—will you do it? It will be hard for you I know, at first, to give up the friends with whom your life is now passed, and to content yourself with me; but you will find I will be very loving to you, very docile, very obedient, and do everything you wish."

He was silent for a few minutes, and sat with knitted brows and folded arms, as though some great struggle were passing through his mind. Then he spoke, keeping his face averted from her, and with his eyes fixed upon the ground:

"It would not do, Kitty," he said; "it wouldn't do at all! We are neither of us fitted to go roughing it in the way we should have to do if we carried out your suggestion; we have not been brought up in the way to bear it—at least I have not, I know—knocking about in the steerage of a ship with a parcel of Irish emigrants, and having to fight our way out to the backwoods, and struggle or starve there! It's all very well to talk about, and sounds very romantic and spirited, and all that, but it wouldn't pay. You are right enough in saying that something must be done—that some change must be made—and that is what I have come down to talk over with you."

"Go on, Fred," she said, laying her hand on his, only too happy to think that she was to be consulted in his plan.

He looked at her uneasily, guiltily, half shrinking from her touch.

"It's a difficult thing that I've got to say, Kitty," he commenced, bracing himself up to make a plunge into this subject; "but it has to be said, and therefore, I may as well go through it. The fact is, I am broke, dead beat, cornered. I have but a very little money in the world, and I do not know where to look for any more. I am deeply in debt, and I don't see a chance of my creditors holding out much longer. Now, this being the state of affairs, there suddenly comes to me a chance of being able to clear off everything, to set myself quite free, and to be a rich man for the remainder of my life. What do you say to that?"

"Say to it?" she cried. "There is not much doubt as to what one would say in such a position, if the chance is one which you can honorably avail yourself of; if it involves your doing nothing of which you ought to feel ashamed accept it at once."

"That is just the point, Kitty," he said, after some little hesitation; "it involves my doing something which I cannot bear even to think of."

"And that is?" she asked.

"And that is parting from you," he said, looking askance at her.

She strove to keep back her tears, but they were glistening in her eyes as she said:

"I had hoped that that was all over. I don't think I should much mind what happened so long as we were together; but Fred, we have been parted so much lately, I have seen so little of you during the past year and a half, though I suppose I must not mind the separation for a few more months, if it were to conduce so much to our future happiness. It would not be for more than a few months, would it, Fred?"

His brow darkened, and the three red parallel bars appeared on his forehead, as he thought to himself:

"She won't take the hint, and I shall have to speak plainly to her."

"Look here, Kitty," he said aloud, turning to her, "the prospect is as good for me as I have said—better even; and there is only one obstacle to it, and that is you!"

"I—I am an obstacle to your prosperity and happiness, Fred; how can that be?"

"Since you won't understand me," he said in a very dogged voice, "and since you compel me to speak in plain terms, I must repeat that you are the only obstacle to my success in life. If I were not married to you I could have wealth to keep up my position properly, could live happily and like a gentleman. As it is, I am a poor, broken, hunted-down outcast, and all on your account."

"Oh, Fred, Fred!" she cried, sobbing violently; "what cruel words! How do I stand in your way?"

"By being my wife!" he cried; "don't you understand me? If I were—if I were free, I could marry a woman with a large fortune tomorrow, or as soon as I wished—there is one at this moment dying to have me! I should not love her, Kitty, of course; I should never care for her one bit as I have cared for you—as I should care for you still!"

She had gradually slipped away from his arm, and was sitting upright on her chair which she had drawn aside, cold and impassive as a statue.

"As you would care for me still," she repeated, "when you were married to another woman! What should I be to you then? I do not understand the position!"

"Don't you see?" he exclaimed. "Your father and mother are dead, your brother is in Australia, or somewhere, and there is no one knows of our marriage but our two selves. Now, suppose we agreed to forget that such a ceremony ever took place between us, and I married this woman who is so fascinated with me? I should be your husband all the same, except in the eyes of the world. I should never care for her, but I should constantly come to see you, and see more of you almost

than I have done since we were married, and I should be able to give you plenty of money, Kitty, that you might live in ease and comfort—don't you see?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, in a hard, cold voice, "I see very plainly. You wish to sell yourself to some rich woman who has taken a fancy to you, and because I am in the way, and you could not conclude the negotiation without my consent, you wish to make me an accessory to the bargain. I am not to let the world know that I am your wife. I am to try and forget it myself, and in return for that, you will come and see me very often, and will give me money and fine clothes, and those sort of things—just as if I were your mistress, in fact—is not that what you mean?"

"You put it rather roughly," he said, still looking down; "but that's about what I mean—what do you say?"

"Say," she cried, springing up and confronting him; "that I wonder that even you, with all your hardness, and all your selfishness, should have had the courage to make such a proposition to me; that I wonder that I should have fallen so low, that you should have dared thus to address me. I have been a patient and a loving wife to you, Frederick Randall. For two years I have struggled on, nearly always alone; and for some of the time in this deserted, out of the way place, living on a pittance barely sufficient to keep body and soul together; and even for that I have had to write you constantly, while you—I know it, though I never mentioned it before—you have been enjoying yourself as best you might, and leading a free and dissipated life. I have done all this because I loved you—because I was your wife; but now, when you ask me to deny that title, to give up that position, in order to pander further to your selfish interest, when you ask me to degrade myself in my own eyes, and when you propose to degrade me in the eyes of the world, by letting people think that I am merely your hired mistress, I refuse, distinctly and decidedly, I refuse!"

She brought her hand heavily down upon the table as she said these words, and glared at him with eyes which were blazing with scorn and fury.

Sir Frederick Randall sat back in his chair, regarding her with a look which for a few moments was as savage as her own.

Then with a motion of his hand, as if lightly tossing something into the air, he burst into a loud, discordant laugh.

"I thought I could rile you," he cried; "but I didn't think I could do it so effectually as that. Why, Kitty," he continued, rising from his chair, and putting his arm round her waist, "you did not think I meant it, my girl, did you; you didn't think for a minute that I was in earnest?"

"I did think so, Fred," said Kitty, holding back from him, "and I can scarcely think otherwise now."

"Bah!" he cried, "it's only done for a joke—just to try you, and nothing more. I know you are devoted to me, and could not bear to part with me, and all that; but I wanted to hear you say so. I did not know whether, as we have been parted so much, that your feeling for me might have worn off, and I wanted to try you, and I did—didn't I, dear?"

"You did, indeed, Fred," said the girl, quietly; "so much so, that I hope you won't attempt anything of the kind again."

He was buried in thought now, and did not appear to hear her; so after glancing at him she repeated the words.

"Eh!" he said, with a start; "not I, indeed; don't be afraid of that; a joke of that kind doesn't bear repetition; but I did come here to say something to you, Kitty, and that something is what your own proposition foreshadowed."

"How do you mean?" she asked, earnestly.

"I mean that I feel just as you do. That this life of separation is nothing worth, and must come to an end. Henceforth our lot in life must be together—not in America, dear—

we will find some nearer place than that; and not here, either, for there is nothing to be done in an out-of-the-way hole like this!"

A light came into the girl's eyes, a bright light of hope as she said:

"Do you really mean that? Are you going to take me away? Am I to remain with you, to share your life with you?"

"You are, indeed," he replied.

"You don't look me in the face when you say so, Fred."

"I can do that easily enough."

And he could, and did. Falsity and deceit were such constant practices of his, that he had no difficulty in investing them with the outward semblance of truth.

"Then indeed I shall be happy!" said Kitty, nestling closely to him. "I know there is a good time in store for us, and that all we have to do is to keep straight in the world, and trust in one another, and any help that we want in starting we can get from Dr. Travers: he said as much to me. By the way, Fred, I have not shown you his portrait."

As she opened the drawer she turned laughingly round to him saying, "You need not be jealous, though he is a good looking man, and really younger than he appears in the photograph—see!"

He took the portrait from her hand without saying a word, and held it to the firelight.

Suddenly he dropped it upon the floor.

"What was his confounded name, did you say?" he asked sharply.

"Travers—Dr. Travers. What is the matter, Fred?"

He had picked up the portrait by this time, and was looking at it again.

"I could swear it was the same face," he muttered; "a little older, perhaps, but never to be forgotten by me! And a doctor, too! The coincidence is strange, to say the least of it!"

"What do you think of my friend, Fred?" said Kitty, coming up to him and looking over his shoulder.

"An intelligent face," he said. "And did you ever hear his Christian name?"

"Often and often—his wife always calls him Walter."

"The same, by the Lord!" he muttered. "And you say there is no chance for this—this Travers coming down here again just now?"

"No chance of his ever coming here again, Fred, unless his wife's health should require it, and he does not seem to think it will; but I am to see him in London when I go there—you will take me, won't you?"

"Oh yes," he answered, "I will take you. And now, Kitty," he said, rising from his chair and putting on his overcoat, "I must be off. I left my horse at the end of the village. In about a fortnight you may expect to see me again, and then you must be ready to accompany me."

"You will come to take me away?" she said, clasping her hands. "How delightful! You will be sure to bring down money for the rent, Fred, for that will have to be paid up, you know, and there are one or two little things else to be settled—it won't be much, dear, and you will soon save it when I am keeping house for you again."

"By the way, I wouldn't give any hint that I was going off, Kitty, or they might be asking you questions about what you were going to do, and that sort of thing, which would be difficult for you to answer. Take them by surprise, you know; that's the best way, I think."

"As you please, Fred," she said; "but I should like to say good-bye to Mr. Harvey."

"Oh, well, you could do that when I come down here; plenty of time for that, then. Now, good-bye—look out for me in about a fortnight's time."

He held her in his arms for a minute, and then quitted the house.

As he strolled down the road, he stopped.

"Dick Phillimore was right," he said; "she would not listen to it for an instant. I saw there was no use in pressing it, so dodged round and

pretended it was a joke as the only way of getting out of it. Well, if you won't fall into my plans, my lady, you must take the consequences, that's all."

And with set lips and scowling brow he started forth once more upon his journey.

CHAPTER VII.

TEMPTED.

"CURSE the bacon!" said Dick Phillimore. "It's quite raw on one side, and quite black on the other. It's the fault of this infernal fire, I suppose, which is altogether too low, and yet I daren't go down and ask the landlady for any more coals, for fear she should request me to settle that little bill."

Mr. Phillimore knelt down as he spoke, and taking a splinter of wood, a fragment of a broken box, in his hand, tried to rake a few ashes together in the best way possible.

He had on no coat, but was dressed in a very shabby pair of trowsers, and a torn and dingy shirt. His hair was uncombed, and his jolly cheeks bore traces of a beard of three days' growth, and there was no question that his whole appearance was poverty-stricken and woe-begone.

"It's deuced hard," he said, mournfully surveying the small wire gridiron on which the scorched bit of bacon lay. "I had kept that as a tit-bit for this morning's breakfast just to help me get down this horrible decoction of burnt horse-beans, which they call coffee, and now it is not fit to eat. Richard Phillimore, my boy, you are down on your luck and no mistake! Where are the swell clothes with which a few weeks since you delighted the eyes of the fashionable world? Gone to the pawnshop! Where are the swell apartments in which you received your friends? Changed for this sky-parlor in a fifteenth-rate street in Soho. If something doesn't turn up presently—and pretty quickly, too, I shall have to apply for relief to the parish; and under the present absurd constitution of affairs, the parish won't give me anything unless I do some work in exchange for it. Mighty unpleasant kind of work, too, such as breaking stones, or picking oakum, or hard manual labor of that kind, which never agreed with my constitution. What is there that can possibly turn up? Nothing but Fred, and he is such a slippery dog, there is no knowing where to have him. I begin to suspect, too, that Fred is pretty well played out, and that if he don't carry through this little American arrangement he will have to make short work of it, and try his luck on some distant shore. What a close fellow he is! How sly and cunning! Now, though I am his partner and his pal, and his chum in everything, I have not the least idea where he is at the present time. I have a notion that he has gone after Kitty, but he has never told me so, has never even mentioned to me where Kitty has been living all this time."

"If my ideas are right, I think he might have spared himself the journey. From what I have seen of Kitty she is as true as steel when taken the right way; but she wouldn't stand any woman's coming in between her and Fred, and if he tries to persuade her to that, he will soon enough find out the difference."

"He's a clever fellow, too, especially with women. It was wonderful to see the way he got hold of that little Yankee girl and the influence he began to exercise over her from the first. There is no doubt that these people have plenty of money, and I only wish it could be picked up in some other way. I am a great deal too soft-hearted; that's the fault with me where women are concerned. I don't like treating them badly. There is not a man in the world that I would be particular about robbing of his last penny or his shirt, if I wanted it myself, but I can't deal that way with women."

"If one could only get up some good swindle, and put this old Adams into it—a bubble company of some sort, a tin mine down in Cornwall, or a railway in Africa—but I haven't even

got enough money to pay for the stationery and postage stamps, to say nothing of the advertisements. Hallo, here's somebody coming up stairs. I wonder if it's the landlady after the rent? No, the footstep isn't heavy enough."

His reflections were interrupted by a sharp tap at the door, and without waiting for permission to enter, Sir Frederick Randall strode into the room.

He was dressed pretty much as he had been on the occasion of his visit to Brauxholme, wearing the same heavy overcoat and overlapping cap.

"Hallo!" cried Dick Phillimore—"hallo, Fred! What's the meaning of this? Are the sheriff's officers after you, my boy? If so, this is a very bad place for you to run to earth in; they will find you here easily, depend upon it."

"Hold your prate," said Sir Frederick, angrily; "there is no one after me, and nothing to fear; the only reason for my wrapping myself up in this way was, that it is not exactly the quarter in which a man would care to be recognized as visiting his friends."

"You are right, Fred," said Dick Phillimore, not in the least annoyed, "and it isn't a quarter that I would remain in half an hour longer—but for one reason—that I can't get into another. It is no good my asking you if you have breakfasted, because if you have not, so much the worse for you. I hadn't enough for myself, and, consequently, have none to share with my friends."

"Do you mean to say that you are as hard up as that?" asked Sir Frederick.

"I mean to say," said Mr. Phillimore, slowly fumbling in his pocket, and producing two coins therefrom, "that this threepenny-bit and this halfpenny constitutes my sole means of making a legal tender in the coin of the realm; and I will defy you to pick out from any asylum you choose any one sufficiently idiotic to call threepence halfpenny riches."

"I am not much better off myself," said Sir Frederick, throwing himself into a chair and plunging his hands into his pockets. "It's terribly annoying to be so cramped for money, when there is a prospect of having such a big thing within one's grasp."

"It is always terribly annoying to be pressed for money, dear Frederick," said Mr. Phillimore. "But tell me more about the big thing—how does it progress? What are the chances?"

"Partly good and partly bad," said the baronet, tapping upon the floor with his feet. "I have seen the young lady, and made her an offer."

"The deuce you have! What a wonderful fellow you are? I never proposed to a woman in my life. And did the young lady accept you?"

"She did, then and there, without any hesitation."

"That's fine! Now what about papa—didn't he hesitate at all?"

"He knows nothing of it. I told Minnie not to say a word to a soul about what had transpired between us, until I returned from a little journey I was about to make."

Mr. Phillimore emitted a long, low whistle.

"You can understand, perhaps, the object of that journey?" asked the baronet, looking hard at him.

"I conclude," said Mr. Phillimore, "it was to see Kitty."

"Rightly guessed," said Sir Frederick.

"And you have seen her?"

"I have."

"Explained what you wished?"

"Sufficiently."

"And the result?"

"She refuses," said Sir Frederick.

"By the Lord, I knew it," said Dick Phillimore, bringing his hand heavily down upon the table.

"Yes, sir," said Sir Frederick, rising from his chair, and nervously walking up and down the room with short, rapid steps. "I put it to her as strongly as I could, brought all the tact

I had to bear upon it, made her see, as I thought, how plain it would be for both our interests—and she refused."

"How did she take it?" asked Dick Phillimore, leaning back in his chair, and looking up at his friend; "quietly?"

"Quietly!" echoed Sir Frederick; "as quietly as a tigress would, if you were to endeavor to steal one of her cubs out of her den. Quietly! She stormed like a tragedy actress; spoke out about my selfishness in leaving her to struggle on, on what she called a pittance—she is about right there, she certainly has had little enough money—and accused me of wishing to degrade her by making people believe she was my mistress! She got that notion in her head because I told her I should not care about a woman I was pressed to marry, but would come and see her all the same."

"Poor Kitty," said Dick Phillimore, shaking his head; "poor, dear Kitty!"

"Yes, that's all very well," said Sir Frederick, savagely; "but what about poor, dear Frederick?"

"Poor, dear Frederick was an idiot ever to think that his plan was practicable. It might have been done with some women; a good pension and a new line of life would be an object to them, but not with such a woman as Kitty. The American scheme is blown into the air, dear sir, and no two ways about it."

"By all the saints, it shall not be blown into the air," said Sir Frederick, pausing in his walk, and glaring at his companion; "but I will carry it through one way or the other."

"Certainly," said Dick Phillimore, "never say die, and that sort of thing. I admire your pluck; but what is the other way?"

"Do you really want to know?" said the baronet, in a low voice.

"Well," said Dick Phillimore, producing the previously mentioned coins from his pocket, "as these are the only two portraits of her majesty—not like her, by the way, too young, and an arrangement of the hair such as I never saw her wear—as these are the only two royal portraits which I possess, and as we have for some years past been hunting in couples, during which you have provided most of the provender, I confess to a natural interest in the subject."

"See here, then," said Sir Frederick, seating himself at the table, on which he leant his arms, and brought his face close opposite to his companion's; "I have not thought it out much; it is all in the rough as I lay it before you, but an idea has crossed my mind that—if this plan is carried out, it is clear that Kitty must be gotten rid of somehow—is it not?"

"If you are to marry Miss Minnie Adams—and the law against bigamy is not annulled—it is perfectly clear that your present wife must be gotten rid of," said Dick Phillimore.

"Stop that fooling and listen, man," said Sir Frederick. "You and Kitty had been always very good friends, have you not?"

"I think so," said Dick. "She used to think me funny and odd, and laughed at my queer ways—oh, yes, she and I always got on very well together."

"Do you think she would trust you?" asked the baronet.

"Do you mean with money?" asked Dick Phillimore. "If so, she would be the first person that ever did."

"Pshaw!" said Sir Frederick, "we are talking serious business. I mean, do you think she could put confidence in you—do what you tell her—act as you advised?"

"To a certain extent, yes," said he.

Sir Frederick was silent for a few minutes. Then in a lower tone, he said:

"All the drinking, all the card playing and general dissipation which you gone through during the last few years have not obliterated your medical knowledge, I suppose?"

"Not in the least," said he. "At the worst times I could always dip my head into a bucket of water and steady myself sufficiently to comprehend the condition of a case, and I

can do it now. But what on earth are you driving at?"

"I was thinking," said Sir Frederick, speaking slowly and looking nervously round—"I must tell you that I made it all straight with her before I left—told her it was only a trick that I had played upon her to try her, and that henceforth we would live regularly together, and I would acknowledge her as my wife—I was thinking that suppose I could put off the marriage with this American girl for some two or three months, and that in the meantime you and I and Kitty were to take a little cottage in some rural district, not a great distance from London, so that I could run up and see Minnie Adams occasionally."

He paused, and Dick, who had been listening to him open-mouthed, struck in:

"Little cottage, yes; but how is the little cottage to be paid for, and what's to be done in it?"

"I would manage to pay for it," said Sir Frederick. "As to what is to be done in it, I should look to you for that."

"Look to me?" echoed Dick still in astonishment.

"You are dull and senseless to-night," said his friend. "Suppose we three were living there together, in the same way that we have done once or twice before, and suppose Kitty were to fall sick?"

"No chance of that," said Dick; "one of the healthiest women in the world, splendid development of chest, magnificent organization, proof against almost anything."

"Almost anything!" whispered Sir Frederick, "but not proof against the constant watching and attendance of a skilled medical man, with a knowledge of the exact properties of drugs, whose advancement in life, nay, whose very existence, so far as life's comfort and luxuries are concerned, depended upon her death."

"What!" cried Dick Phillimore, starting up. "Why, you scoundrel! you infernal villain! I comprehend you at last! You want to poison this girl, and you have selected me as your tool. You know me to be a drunken, dissolute, wretched card-sharper, scoundrel if you will, and you think it easy to persuade me into being a murderer too!"

"Silence! hush!" said Sir Frederick, seizing hold of him.

"I won't be silent," cried Dick Phillimore, shaking off his grasp. "Don't lay your hands on me, for even this wretched, dirty shirt would be polluted by the touch of such a scoundrel! You have overshot the mark, Sir Frederick, I think. I will take advantage of a man at a game of cards, and would do my best to clean him out in betting; I would do all I could to disable him in a fair, stand-up fight, but I would not take his life. How much less would I harm a poor girl for whom I have a kindly feeling, and who, as you yourself have said, places confidence in me."

"I—I didn't mean"—stammered the baronet.

"Don't try that on with me," cried Dick, "for I won't believe you as easily as she did. You *did* mean what you said, and henceforward you and I part company forever. This is not a very swell apartment," he added, looking round, "but it is too good for such a crawling serpent as you. Get out of it!" and he pointed to the door.

"So this is your gratitude, is it, Richard Phillimore?" said Sir Frederick, slowly rising; "this is the way you talk to a man who has many a time stood between you and starvation. All right; be it as you say. I shall live to see you rotting in a ditch yet!"

"And I shall live to see you swinging on a gallows!" cried Dick. "Clear out now, while there is time, for, by the Lord, I cannot control myself much longer!"

Sir Frederick Randall, who had by this time reached the door, turned round slowly, shook his fist menacingly at his companion, and disappeared.

"There's a precious villain for you!" mut-

tered Dick Phillimore, sinking into his chair as soon as he was alone. "Now Richard P., what you have got to do is, to clear your senses and stand between that girl and harm, for my dear Frederick will carry out his plan, now that he has once made up his mind to it with my aid or without it, so there is no time to be lost. If I only knew where Kitty lived, I would give her warning. However, I shall manage to find it, I dare say. I have untied a bigger knot than this before now, and I must bring my teeth to work as well as my hands."

CHAPTER VIII.

A DESPERATE DEED.

Just about ten days after her husband had paid his unexpected visit, as Kitty was one morning looking out of her bedroom window, in the intervals of dressing, her attention was attracted by a movement among the stunted bushes which fringed the edge of the cliff.

At first she took but little heed of it, thinking probably that it was occasioned by some bird or animal, which had become entrapped there, and was endeavoring to force its way out.

There must, however, have been some strange fascination in the place, for Kitty found her eyes, from time to time, reverting to it; and, at length, suspending her toilet operations, she opened the window, and leaning out, gave herself up to the elucidation of the mystery.

There was a light thin haze, what is commonly known as a sea-fog, rising from the surface of the water, and rendering dim and shadowy all the objects which had been encircled in its embrace; but Kitty, whose eyes had long been accustomed to these atmospheric influences, soon perceived that the object which she had taken for an animal was a human being; and, after a long and searching gaze, discovered that the person whose actions she was watching was none other than her servant Hannah.

What was the deaf and dumb girl doing at such an hour in such an extraordinary and dangerous position.

Kitty looked with horror as she saw the girl lying almost flat upon her face, and creeping closer and closer to the edge of the beetling cliff, now dragging herself along by her hands and letting her head hang over, she seemed to be gazing into the depths below.

Then, shading her eyes with her arms, she would peer out along the cliff, not looking towards the village, but far away in the opposite direction, towards the bold headland, which seemed to stand up sharp against the horizon and blotted out further prospect.

"What can have come to Hannah this morning?" muttered Kitty to herself. "Any one to see her would think she had taken leave of her senses, and indeed, if I had chosen to believe the people of the village, who are as superstitious as they are simple, I should long ago have been convinced that the poor creature was deranged. Hitherto, however, I have had no reason to doubt that Hannah's infirmity has in no way damaged her common sense, a quality which she appears to me to possess in more than the ordinary degree. Heavens!" she cried aloud, alarmed at the new movement on the girl's part, "she will certainly fall over the cliff. Hannah! Hannah! How absurd of me, forgetting that it is impossible for her to hear me. Well, she seems to have had enough of danger for the present, and is apparently returning home. I must endeavor to learn from her the cause of this extraordinary behavior."

When Kitty had finished dressing she went down into the little parlor, where the snowy table-cloth was already laid, and her breakfast awaiting her.

She had scarcely seated herself when the dumb girl entered the room with a smiling face, advancing straight to her mistress, took up her hand and kissed it.

Kitty nodded in return and patted the girl's head. Then leading her to the window, pointed toward the edge of the cliff, and turning round, touched Hannah lightly on the breast.

The girl comprehended the pantomime instantly, and understood that her mistress was inquiring what she had been doing in the direction pointed out, and her face at once darkened.

Then she commenced her explanation in dumb show, so rapid that to eyes unaccustomed to it, it would have been totally unintelligible.

To Kitty, however, it was as plain as spoken words.

The girl closed her eyes for an instant and laid her cheek upon her hand, then opened them suddenly, and pointed to the heavens.

"She woke early this morning," said Kitty, keeping up her running commentary as she observed the girl's motions, "went out, attracted by the freshness and beauty of the day. Scarcely had she closed the door behind her, when she saw a man walking along the edge of the cliff, a stranger, too, whom she had never seen before. What was he like? Good heavens! is the girl mad or am I? She must repeat that again!"

And she made her a sign to do so.

Instantly the girl made a motion of pulling a cap over her face, drawing a line beneath the eyes to indicate the place where the peak came to, then threw her arms round, as though wrapping herself in a huge heavy coat, and walked with lumbering footsteps up and down the room, as though encumbered by its weight.

"My suspicions were right!" said Kitty, at the close of this performance. "She must mean Fred—he must be somewhere in the neighborhood; it is about the time he said he would return."

But Hannah had not finished her imitations. She skulked softly up and down the room, she peered furtively over her left shoulder, she shaded her eyes with her hand, and looked down, as though from the top of the cliff, measuring the depth of the drop to the beach below. Then quickly looking round, she raised her eyebrows as though she had discovered she was watched, and pretended to make off with hurried steps.

"Exactly," said Kitty, "it was Fred. He was waiting about here, doubtless, until he thought it safe to come to the cottage; and when he saw the girl noticing him he took to his heels. I recollect how fearful he was the last time he was here, lest he should be seen by any one, and how he asked particularly about this girl. I must frame some excuse for getting rid of her for the day, for, doubtless, Fred has come down to fulfill his promise of clearing up matters here; and taking me away with him; and when all is settled I will send him on ahead, while I remain behind for an hour or two, to take farewell of Mr. Harvey and poor Hannah."

According, after breakfast, to the dumb girl's great astonishment and delight, her mistress conveyed to her the intelligence that she could have that day for a holiday; and she determined to enjoy it, by riding over with the old carrier to the market town, and spending the hours between her arrival and her return in staring open-mouthed in at the windows of the shops, which had for her an unfailing attraction.

There was no knowing when her husband might arrive at the cottage, so Kitty thought it necessary to dispatch Hannah as soon as possible; and as soon as the girl was gone, she set herself to work in sweeping and tidying up the place. She had been scarcely engaged in this occupation ten minutes, when a shadow fell across her; turning round she saw Sir Frederick at the window.

He points to the door, and the next instant she had opened it for him.

"That's well done," he said, as he threw off his coat and cap, and kissed her on the forehead, "I must have taken you all unawares, Kitty, and yet you could scarcely have been quicker if you had expected me."

"I did expect you," she said, looking saucily at him.

"The mischief you did!" he cried. "Oh, you remembered what I said, and looked for

my return about this time—that is what you meant?"

"Not at all," she said; "I knew you were in the neighborhood this morning, and naturally expected your arrival here."

"Who told you I was in the neighborhood?"

"No one."

"You saw me yourself?"

"No, indeed."

"Don't play the fool, Kitty," he said, angrily.

"What does it mean?"

"Only this, Fred," she said, laying her arm caressingly upon him; "poor Hannah, the deaf and dumb girl, whom you know attends upon me, conveyed to me in her pantomimic language, this morning, that she had seen a stranger walking on the cliff, and looking over it at the sea below; and by what I gathered from her description of the man's dress, I concluded it was you."

"Oh, that was it, was it," growled Sir Frederick, still somewhat surlily. "And what has become of dummy now?"

"I knew you would come here, and that you would not want to see her, so I gave her a holiday, and sent her off for the whole day."

"That was quite right," said Sir Frederick; "I hate all those kind of creatures—cripples, idiots, and dummies—and can't bear to have them staring at me."

"Poor Hannah," said Kitty; "she is very harmless—however, she is safe out of the way. And now, Fred, tell me what on earth brought you here so early in the morning."

"I came to Pullington, by the mail, and walked over in the night. It was earlier than I anticipated and I got here by daybreak."

"But what on earth were you doing on the cliff? Hannah seemed to convey that you were peering about in a most inquisitive manner."

"Hannah's a fool," said Sir Frederick, gruffly.

"I was only looking about for a way to get you out of this place."

"To get me out of this place—not by way of the cliff, Fred, surely?"

"Yes, by way of the cliff," he said. "The fact is, that some friends of mine are cruising about here in a yacht, and I thought the best and the safest way for us to slip quietly off, and in order to prevent any inquisitive fools hitting upon our track, was to ask these fellows to give us a passage for a day or two, land us at Torquay or Sidmouth, or the first place at which they happen to touch, so I went up the cliff to see if there were any signs of them, or if I could discover any path by which I could reach the shore."

"And did you see any signs of them?"

"No," he answered shortly; "they can not have got round here yet."

"There was a yacht sailing off here yesterday afternoon," said Kitty.

"The deuce there was!"

"Yes, but it could not be the one you mean; for the coast guard to whom I spoke, told me she was an American vessel."

Sir Frederick Randall started at the word.

"Then," he said hastily, "I dare say it was the same; the fellows on board of her are full of nonsense, and they may have shown Yankee colors just for the fun of the thing. What has become of her?"

"She sailed off to the westward, and when I went out for my evening stroll, she was out of sight."

"She will be back in time, I dare say," said Sir Frederick, with averted face. "We will go out on the cliff and look after her presently. Well, how have you been going on?"

"Very well, Fred. I have not said a word about my going away, of course, as you bade me not; but I have been quietly putting my things together and am quite ready to start."

"That's right," he said. "It will be better far for us to get away before this dumb wretch returns."

"Where are we going to, Fred?"

"I have not yet quite made up my mind; but somewhere near London, of course."

"Not into London itself, dear, I hope—you know how hateful the city is to me. In its

glare and bustle and noise—some quiet place in the neighborhood will do, won't it?"

"Oh! yes, that will do well enough," said Sir Frederick. "You know I must be in the bustle and noise, as you call it, during the day, for my chances of money-making lie there; but you can have a quiet place in the suburbs, and I can come out to you in the evening."

"That is what I would prefer," said Kitty. "And you are going to acknowledge me as your wife, and introduce me to your friends, Fred?"

"Oh! of course," he replied carelessly.

"Yes, but I mean your nice friends, not such as Mr. Phillimore."

Fred started.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Well, Mr. Phillimore is a good kind creature, and I like him very much in his way; but you know he is rather dissolute, and not quite the style of company you ought to keep now; you are going to be a proper married man, Fred."

"Dick Phillimore won't trouble you much," said Sir Frederick, shortly.

"You have not quarrelled with him, I hope," asked Kitty. "He was such a good fellow, and so kind to me just as we were married, and always sounding your praises so loudly—you could not quarrel with Mr. Phillimore, Fred."

"Oh, I should not quarrel with him," said Sir Frederick; "only I feel just what you say about his being scarcely a fit companion for me under the present circumstances, and so we will drop him quietly, that's all."

"Poor Mr. Phillimore; perhaps when he sees how changed you are, Fred, he will take pattern after your example and reform."

"Yes, perhaps so," said the baronet; "but I think we have given sufficient time to discussing Richard Phillimore—let us talk of other things. Do you think the people here will be much surprised to find you are gone, Kitty?"

"Why, yes, Fred, of course they will! I have come to be looked upon now as one of the regular inhabitants of the village; and do you know I have been worrying myself a great deal thinking over the deceitful part I have been acting towards these good people, and how odd my behavior will seem in slipping off without taking farewell of them. However, there is one comfort, I shall not leave any debt behind me. You brought the money for the rent and the other things, didn't you, Fred?"

"Oh, yes, of course," he answered.

"Well, then, before we start, I will take it round to Mr. Harvey, and leave it with him when I say good-bye. He can tell the village people to-morrow that I was obliged to go, without giving any reason—they will accept anything he says."

"Do you think," said Sir Frederick, looking down into the fire, "that there will be much inquiry after you?"

"Not if Mr. Harvey tells the people he knew that I was going, and that it was all right."

"Yes, but," said Sir Frederick, "suppose Mr. Harvey was not in when you went to him, that you could not see him for some reason or other, would there be much outcry when the people found you were not there?"

"No, I think not," she replied. "If any harm had happened to me—I mean if any attempt at robbery had been made, and there were one or two suspicious tramps about the village this time last year—they would be able to see traces of disorder in the cottage; but, seeing that all the things were straight, they would conclude that I had been called away somewhere; and before they started their inquiries, Mr. Harvey would have received a letter from me explaining all."

"Yes," said Sir Frederick, who had been plunged in thought for the last few minutes; "exactly; I see. And where is dummy spending her holiday?"

"At Pallington; she always goes there whenever she has a chance, to stare at the shops—she's just like a child, you know."

"Which way did she go?"

"Oh, there would be no chance of our meeting her, if it is that you are thinking of. She goes with old Goodlake, the carrier, and will return snugly ensconced in the recesses of his cart, while if it were daylight, and the tide were out, we should go by the lower road in the valley of the rocks; but I thought you talked of a yacht, which you expected to take us up Fred?"

"So I did," he said; "and it will be there right enough, and I suppose we ought to go out and look for her. Put on your hat, Kitty, and come. By the way," he muttered, "have you got any spirits in the house? It is a strange thing to ask such a temperate creature as you, I know, but I am tired and chilled with my night's walk, and I think a little brandy will do me good."

"Fortunately I have some brandy," she said, "part of the stock which Dr. Travers brought down from London, and insisted upon my keeping in the house in case of illness."

She placed the bottle before him, and he poured out a wineglassful and tossed it off.

"That's better," he said. "Now, as soon as we are ready, we will go out and look for the yacht. Stay, you go out first and see that there is no one spying about."

"You don't know the customs of the place, Fred," she said, with a smile; "there is never any one about here at this time. I told you so," she said, after looking round, "the coast is quite clear."

He had left his huge overcoat behind him, but had put on his heavy disguising cap, and pulled it low down over his forehead; his shooting coat was buttoned closely round him, and he tucked in the ends of his neckcloth, which were fluttering in the breeze.

So they walked out together, Kitty stopping for an instant to tie up the skirt of her heavy merino dress which she wore, and which rather encumbered her progress.

"No sign of your friends yet, Fred," said Kitty, after they had been strolling idly along for ten minutes.

"You are right," said he, "but they will not disappoint me; I have perfect faith in them."

He looked stealthily around; not a human being was in sight, nothing living was to be seen, save a few sheep some distance off nibbling the scant herbage.

They were descending a bit of undulating ground, a little indentation on the face of the cliff, between two bluffs, which rose before and behind them high and towering; below them, several hundred feet down, lay the broad expanse of ocean, calm and spotless as a mirror.

A thick, heavy rain-cloud for a moment obscured the sun, the wind had dropped, and not the faintest sigh of a breeze was to be heard.

All nature was dark and hushed and fitting for his hellish purpose.

The girl was walking on the side nearest to the edge of the cliff, within a few feet of it.

"See!" cried Sir Frederick, suddenly. "What is that creeping round the headland?"

The girl glanced at him, and then made a step or two forward, looking in the direction of his pointed hand.

"It must be the boat," he cried, "you cannot catch it from there! See—yonder!"

The girl made another step forward, and the next instant, with a rapid action of his arms, he thrust her over the edge of the cliff into the yawning space.

She uttered one loud, long, piercing cry.

Shutting out the sound from his ears with his hands, the murderer turned and fled in the direction of the cottage.

Staggering like a drunken man, with his knees knocking together beneath him, now sliding on the slippery surface of the short dew-covered grass; now stumbling, as his feet caught in the holes made by burrowing vermin, but always pursuing his headlong career, Sir Frederick hurried on until he came in sight of the little cottage, where for such a

length of time poor Kitty had passed a peaceful, if not a happy life.

Then he stopped.

There was the window from which she had so recently given him a smiling welcome; there was the door through which they had passed together, she confiding in his love and hopeful as to the future; he with his black heart restless and agitated at the thought of the deed which it had conceived, and which he was about to execute.

The deed was done now! There was no crying off—no going back from it.

"Hush! What was that?" He wiped the beads of perspiration from his clammy forehead, and putting his hands to his ears, bent down to listen.

Nothing! nothing but the distant tinkle of the sheep-bell or the hoarse wild cry of the sea-birds high up in the air, wheeling in circling flight above his head.

"Curse the birds! why did they scream like that?" It reminded him of the shriek which she had given, which seemed to pierce his heart, and which even at that moment was ringing in his ears.

See! the birds fly away now, but the noise in his ears still continues; he must rid himself of this folly; he has his work to do, and must go through with it.

No one in sight, he makes sure of that, looking cautiously round.

Then, with straight, sure steps, so different from his former gait, he makes direct for the wicket-gate, unlatches it, hurries through the garden, and entered the room.

The bracelet—let him get that, and he will wait for no more; he knows there is nothing else worth taking.

She kept it in the inner room, in that chest of drawers most likely.

He tries all—one, two, three. Yes, there lies the dark leather case, scarcely hidden under one of the simple pretty cotton dresses which poor Kitty used to wear.

He seizes it, places it in his breast, and is hurrying through the parlor, when he stops.

"What is that she said?" he mutters, "that if robbers had been here the place would be in confusion. It is better to give them that idea, it may divert suspicion."

Then, returning to the bed-room, he pulls out the drawers, and throws their contents in a heap upon the floor, overturns the table in the parlor, and is seizing a burning brand from the grate, when he checks himself.

"No," he says, "it would be folly to fire the place; it would give the alarm too quickly."

He picks up his coat and wraps it round him, pulls his cap over his eyes, and is on the threshold, ready to start, when he staggers forward and listens eagerly.

"A scream," he cried, "a piercing, thrilling scream; it rings in my ears now; it will echo there forever."

He turns back into the house once more, and searches for the brandy bottle, from which he had drank that morning.

He finds it, places it to his lips, takes a long draught, and puts it into his pocket, then he starts forth a murderer, branded with the brand of Cain, and with his wife's innocent blood crying up against him from the ground.

About half an hour after the occurrence of these events, a gracefully-built and elegantly appointed schooner yacht came round the headland, leisurely drifting with the tide and with the half capful of wind, scarcely sufficient to fill the few sails which she carried.

The angry clouds had disappeared and the sun was shining forth in his glory.

Stretched out on a couple of rugs on the yacht's deck, and basking in the genial rays were two gentlemen. One of them was our old acquaintance, Colonel Willamette, the other was the owner of the vessel, Mr. Hoyt, an American gentleman of fortune, whose passion was yachting, and who, during the past season, with his beautiful craft, the Columbia, had sailed and

won several matches with the members of the English yacht clubs.

Both gentlemen were smoking cigars and quietly enjoying the tranquil beauty of the scenery.

The silence was broken by Mr. Hoyt.

"Come now, Harry," said he, "was I not right in persuading you to defer your departure for a week or two—isn't this Devonshire scenery beautiful? I recollect your saying last year, when you were cruising with me, that you never saw anything to beat Narragansett Bay, but I think this is prettier—not so bold, perhaps, but softer and more beautiful—confess that you are glad you came!"

"The place is pretty enough, Wilbur, and you have done every thing you could to make the trip agreeable," said Colonel Willamette, "but after all, I somewhat reproach myself for having lacked the moral courage to sail for America, on the day on which I had fixed. I guess the real reason is that I dare not go home again; I had pictured the old house to myself under such different circumstances that I have a dread of going back to it and living in it in the same solitary state which I have done for years."

"Say," said his friend, "you are still thinking of Minnie Adams, Harry; what will cure you of that infatuation?"

"Nothing," said Colonel Willamette, seriously, "nothing but time—and I doubt if even that would have the power, for till the last day of my life, I shall think of her as I could never of any other human being!"

"And is the case quite hopeless, my friend?"

"Quite, Wilbur, quite! She cut away the last plank beneath my feet, when she told me she could regard me as a brother, but with no other feelings."

"That's so," said Wilbur C. Hoyt, puffing reflectively at his cigar, "it's rough when it comes to that. Love is a fraud, Harry; why don't you do as I do—do without it?"

"I wish to God I could," said Colonel Willamette, "but my love for Minnie Adams is a portion of my life, and both will end at the same time!"

"I believe you," said his friend, "and I am sorry for it. It is a blessing not to be constituted in that way. Now, I am very old, but in my time I have known some nice girls—real cunning, elegant young ladies—but beyond taking a sleigh-ride or dancing a German, I would not give a cent for the best of them!"

"Who's gassing now?" said Colonel Willamette, with a grave smile. "There is no more tender-hearted man living than Wilbur C. Hoyt—none who would be more ready to befriend, in a manly honorable way, any woman who needed it, no matter at what trouble or danger to yourself."

"Bully for me!" cried Hoyt, laughing. "How is that for high? If ever you are under the weather pecuniarily, Harry, you can always earn ten dollars of me on board the Columbia, as my trumpeter. How lovely this is; the green and red of these cliffs, and far away in the distance the little white village climbing up its side. I had Tom Daleham cruising with me last month, and he is such a genuine New Yorker, that he could find nothing to compare these cliffs to but Staten Island, only declaring that it was quite as pretty. Just look at those two bluffs, standing up like two giants guarding the small ravine between them, and—why! What's that?"

He pointed as he spoke, and the colonel, following the direction of his arm, saw on the face of the cliff a dark object standing out in bold relief against the white chalk.

"It looks like a sheep, or some animal that has just slipped over the cliff, and has been caught midway," he said, after a long gaze.

"Sheep—no sheep would look like that!" cried Hoyt, springing to his feet. "More like a bundle of clothes, and I have a strange fancy there is a human being inside of them. Here, Pete!" he cried, to one of the seamen on watch; "hand me my glass, quick!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the sailor, at his keeper's elbow in a moment.

"By the Lord, I was right!" cried Hoyt, after a minute's glance. "It is a human being—a woman, I should guess, from what I can make out from the clothing. She must have slipped over the edge of the cliff, and been caught in her fall by some projecting spur or bush, what I can't clearly make out. One thing, however, is clear, that there is not much chance of her being alive. Whoever she is, she must not be suffered to perish without help. Hallo there, Davis, man the gig, and stow away a mattress, and a couple of slings in it. Give me the surgeon's instrument case, and a roll of lint, and my brandy flask. Look sharp, man, it may be a case of life and death!"

"But how on earth are you going to climb the face of that cliff?" asked Colonel Willamette. "It looks sheer straight up."

"We shall find a way, depend upon it," said Hoyt. "You never found a sailor beaten yet when there was a woman to be helped."

"Nor a soldier either, for the matter of that," said Colonel Willamette, buttoning his jacket. "I am along with you in this!"

"Jump in," cried Wilbur Hoyt. "All ready, men!" he exclaimed, as he followed his friend into the stern sheets. "Steady all—give way!"

And the next moment the little boat went bounding over the water in the direction of the shore.

CHAPTER IX.

TOO LATE.

"Do you hear that bell?"

"Hear it? I should think so; it has been ringing loud enough."

"And ain't you going to answer it?"

"Time enough; no hurry; it's them Yankees in twenty-eight. They're used to niggers in their own country, I understand, and think we have got nothing to do but to attend upon them. We must let 'em see we ain't to be drove; we must, Thomas."

"They are going to be married to-morrow, ain't they?"

"Some of 'em, Thomas; not all. The young gal's going to be married; and a very nice-looking young girl she is."

"That's according as people thinks—there ain't enough of her for my taste."

"You likes plenty for your money, don't you, Thomas? That's what they say of you at the ordinary—quantity before quality is your motto. Who's the happy man, Thomas?"

"Sir Frederick Randall, baronet," answered Thomas, making a mouthful of the words.

"Oh, oh, a tip-top swell!"

"Well, don't know about that," said Thomas.

"He was in the habit of coming to some billiard-rooms where I was waiter a year or two ago, and he used to be precious seedy then; trying to pick up flats, I used to think, and I have an idea that that is his game now, and that he has picked two good 'uns in these Yankees and their daughter. All right; right away, I'm coming."

This was the conversation carried on between two of the waiters of the Star and Garter Hotel, Richmond, a fashionable suburb of London, to which the Adams family had removed for a few days' sojourn, and from which the marriage of their daughter was to take place.

For all had been finally decided between Minnie Adams and Sir Frederick; and her father and mother, duly appealed to, had not refused their consent, though it is only fair to say that Hiram P. had hesitated for some time, and only gave way under the extreme pressure brought to bear upon him by his wife.

That worthy lady was in an ecstasy of delight at the notion of having a baronet for her son-in-law and a titled daughter; the only draw-

back to her happiness being that Sir Frederick had insisted upon the marriage taking place in a very quiet manner.

Mrs. Adams had hoped to have had a long list of aristocratic guests to grace the wedding, but her future son-in-law had informed her that this would not be in any case, as the members of the aristocracy had not yet returned to London, and it was not considered the "correct thing" to have fashionable marriages in the off season.

So the worthy couple had agreed to everything Sir Frederick proposed, and the baronet had succeeded so well that, aided and abetted by Mrs. Adams, he had induced Hiram P. to settle a very large dowry upon Minnie.

"Only on one condition, though, Sir Frederick," Mrs. Adams had said, "and that is, that we fix ourselves somewhere close by your up-town residence, and that I see Minnie every day. I don't propose that we should go back to New York city, to settle down among a lot of loafers and dead-beats, which is always worrying Hiram's life out of him, to lend them a thousand dollars here, and a thousand dollars there, or to scoop them a fortune out of Wall Street; so I have concluded to locate ourselves in London, where we can get the worth of a hundred cents for every dollar we spend."

It was not without a strong protest that Hiram P. had consented to this part of the programme, for the English way of living did not suit him at all. Like most Americans, he was gregarious, and to be shut up in a large room, with only the members of his own family for society, seemed to him pretty much as bad as solitary confinement in the penitentiary in Philadelphia.

Not that he was a talkative man, or in any way given to exchange his ideas with his fellow-creatures.

In the old days, at Titusville, he would sit for hours together round the stove in the hall of the Crittenden House, his hat tilted over his eyes, his boots neatly balanced on the stove-top, at level with his face, and a large, brown spittoon handy for reference, without uttering ten consecutive words.

Occasionally he would ejaculate "Say," but he never said anything himself, or, "Wal;" but that was merely a safety-valve, for fear constant silence should cause him to explode.

He disliked the English method of eating and drinking, detested the huge joints, grieved miserably over the missing delicacies of Indian-corn, buckwheat cakes, cold slaw, raw beats, clam chowder and cranberry sauce, and declared there was not a man that he had yet met throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain, who could fix up a Santa Cruz punch that was worth drinking.

It may be readily imagined that Sir Frederick himself was not well pleased with the idea of being hampered with the old people's company after marriage; and but for the frightful condition of his affairs, he might have endeavored to obtain better terms. He was annoyed, too, that he was only to receive an annual income on his wife's behalf, and not to touch any of Mr. Adams's capital, though the income to be paid to him was very large.

But Hiram P., so easy going in all other matters, was resolute and obstinate in this.

He would not hear of the proposition for a moment; declaring that he had made his own fortune, and would manipulate it in his own way until his death, when it would all go to Minnie.

And in this matter Sir Frederick had not Mrs. Adams's assistance, for she sided with her husband; and declared what Hiram P. said was only right, and must be held to.

* * * * *

It was the evening before the wedding, and Minnie and her lover were seated with their chairs drawn close together before a blazing fire in the little room, at the Star and Garter, which the girl had appropriated as her boudoir.

Sir Frederick was to dine in London that night

at a farewell dinner that was to be given to him by some of his bachelor friends.

"It is almost time that I should go, dearest," he said, drawing her head fondly to him; "but before I start, I want to ask you one question. What has made you so thoughtful and pre-occupied this afternoon? I can understand that the great change in your life which is about to take place, would necessarily have its influence over you, but you have been unusually so, even to me—what was the reason, Minnie?"

"Do not ask me, Fred," said the girl with a shudder. "I thought I had managed to conceal anything like sadness from you—don't ask me what it is!"

"Now you make me more than ever anxious to hear," he exclaimed. "Minnie, I insist."

"You have the right, Fred—or you will have to-morrow, and I can refuse you nothing."

"Listen, then. This afternoon, while waiting for you, I strolled away from the hotel into Richmond Park. I wandered further than I had any intention, and at length came upon a camp of gipsies, nestling down in one of the little dales of the park, their fire burning, and men and women seated round it. I was a little alarmed at first, more especially when one of the girls on seeing me, rose, and ran towards me. But she said she only wanted to tell my fortune, and when I offered her a shilling she refused to take it until she had perused my palm."

"I gave her my hand, and she scanned it eagerly. Then looking up at me she shook her head, and said: 'You are not a wicked woman—no, your face is too innocent and honest for that, it is unwittingly, and without your own knowledge, that you are doing this fearful act.' 'What fearful act?' I asked. 'Bringing ruin upon the body and soul of one who has done you no harm—ask me not how or what it is,' the girl continued; 'for I cannot—will not say!'"

"Tell me one thing?" I asked. "Shall I be punished for this?" "No," said the girl, "for she whom you thus wrong is an angel, and would befriend you in your extremity, thus heaping colds of fire on your head." She then released my hand and ran back to the camp—Fred, what does this mean?"

Sir Frederick had risen from his chair, and stood leaning against the mantel-piece, wiping his brow.

"Mean?" he cried; "some lying, knavish nonsense; of these juggling gipsies, concocted to befool you! To whom could you do any injury?"

"To no one, except through you, Fred. You once told me you had never loved—really loved—any other woman; of course, I know a man like you must have had many flirtations—and worse—but I mean really loved."

"Quite true; I swear it!" he said, and he looked her calmly in the face.

"It is enough, dear," she said, laying her hand in his. "I am satisfied. To-morrow I am yours—now good-night."

* * * * *

Just before noon, the next day, while the bells of old Richmond Church were ringing out a merry peal, a Hanson cab, driven at full speed, dashed up to the gate of the churchyard, where several stylish-looking vehicles were already gathered.

Out of the cab jumped a man, his face pale and haggard, his dress mean, his step faltering.

"Has the ceremony begun?" he asked of the bystanders.

"Just over," said one of them. "See, here is the happy couple coming out of the church."

The man—it was Dick Phillimore—turned slowly round, and seeing a little procession advancing, gasped out:

"Too late! too late!"

Down the churchyard came the wedding party, the bells ringing, the bystanders hurrahing, Sir Frederick Randall bending over his bride, and the old people beyond glowing with exultation.

"No, not too late," muttered Dick Phillimore to himself; "I may yet save her!"

"Stay!" he cried, rushing before the bridal pair, just as Sir Frederick was about to hand his wife into the carriage. "Stay, Miss Adams—do you know me? I am Richard Phillimore. I should have been here before, but I have been ill, very ill."

"Mr. Phillimore!" cried Minnie.

"Stand aside," shouted the baronet, "stand aside!"

"Oh, Frederick, what is this?" cried Minnie, trembling.

"He is mad," whispered Sir Frederick; "you have heard him say he has been ill; he is mad—stand aside, sir!"

By this time he had handed Minnie into the carriage, and as Dick Phillimore pressed after her, Sir Frederick struck him to the ground, and leaping in, closed the door.

The postillions started off, and before the alarm could be given, the hind wheels of the carriage had passed over Dick Phillimore's head, as he lay there senseless in the road.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNEXPECTED APPARITION.

FOUR months had elapsed since the wedding of Minnie Adams with Sir Frederick Randall, and the London season was just getting into full swing.

It was between six and seven o'clock of a pleasant April evening and the streets were filled with men returning from business to their homes, while in the more fashionable parts of the town, carriages were driving up and down, either bringing back their occupants, who had been paying calls and shopping, or waiting to convey their proprietors, then engaged upon their toilets, to some fresh scene of pleasure.

In a cheerful, well-built street leading from Grosvenor Square to Hyde Park, a plain, unpretending but admirably-appointed brougham, with a pair of small fast-trotting horses, evidently on business intent, cut in and out amongst the more gaudy vehicles which were negligently rolling along, and stopped before the door of one of the smaller mansions.

A middle-aged, grave-looking gentleman alighted, and bidding the coachman return for him at ten o'clock, opened the door with his latch-key and entered the house.

He passed through the hall and made his way to the dining-room on the right hand, but ere he reached the door it was opened from the inside, and a handsome lady, holding by the hand a pretty little girl of some five or six years old, stood in the entrance.

"Yes, mamma, you were quite right," said the child, running to the gentleman. "She has such quick ears, papa; she heard the street door shut, and she knew it was you."

"Dear mamma is always right," said the gentleman, stooping down and taking the child in his arms. "It is your old papa come back to you, Ada, and very tired he is."

"You are over-fatiguing yourself, Walter," said the lady, laying her hand fondly upon his shoulder. "Come in now and rest yourself a few moments before dinner. There is your easy-chair, and Ada will run up and fetch your slippers. If you go on in this way I shall insist on your retiring from practice; you know you could do so with perfect ease, and it is only as a recreation that I allow you to continue in the exercise of your profession."

"My sweet Lucy," said the gentleman, "my fatigue is only temporary. When I have had my dinner and a little rest I shall be quite myself again, and as I have no patients to see to-night, I intend to escort you to Lady Downham's."

"I am so glad of that," said his wife, "for Lady Downham would have been disappointed if you had not gone there, and we have been acquainted with her so long, and she was so much attached to dear uncle that I always like to please her."

"Yes, indeed; I recollect, in the old days,

when I first knew you, sometimes thinking that the squire would have proposed to her ladyship after Lord Downham's death, and as she would certainly have accepted him, instead of being Dr. Travers, the famous London physician, I should have remained Dr. King, surgeon to the Westminster County Jail, or in some other equally wretched position."

"But you would have had me with you, Walter; the advent of fortune would have made no difference in my love."

"No, dear one," said her husband, kissing her cheek, "I know that; but it is a pleasant thing now that it has come; and as feeling the pulses of peers is more agreeable than physic-ing prisoners, on the whole I am glad that the squire did not propose for Lady Downham."

And now we may as well make clear what has been obscurely hinted at.

Within six months after the scene in Westminster Jail between Walter King and the convict No. 201, passing under the name of Russell, the discovery of vast quantities of coal on Squire Travers's estate produced a revolution in the old gentleman's affairs, and converted him from a genteel pauper into one of the wealthiest men in his county.

The squire behaved very well under his change of fortune. He expressed his desire that the marriage of Walter King, with his niece, should immediately take place; and at his death, which happened a few months after, he left all his property which was not secured by entail, to Walter and Lucy, with the condition that the former should assume the family name of Travers, and that he should not give up the excellent practice as a physician in London, which he was just beginning to acquire, for at least twelve months after his inheritance of his new wealth.

There was but little need for the squire to have made this injunction, as Walter was so happy in his profession under its new phase, that nothing would have caused him to retire from it, save the necessity of devoting himself to watching over his wife's health; and this, thanks to the excellent effect of Mrs. Travers's visit to Brauxholme, where the sea air, the quite, and poor Kitty's watchful nursing had completely effected her cure, was now done away with.

So Dr. Travers flourished and was happy; happy in his studies: happy in his power of healing the sick and consoling the afflicted; happiest of all, perhaps, when, as now, he sat in his home with his wife and children around him, reflecting on his early privations and on his present comfort.

The dinner was over, and the doctor, after the enjoyment of his two or three glasses of port wine, was lying back in his easy chair, his slippered feet stretched out towards the fender, for the evenings were yet chilly, and just beginning to enjoy a doze, before going up to dress for Lady Downham's entertainment.

The children had gone to bed, and Mrs. Travers, who was their instructress, was arranging some of their lessons for the next day, when the door opened, and the servant announced that a lady wished to see the doctor.

"What's that?" said the doctor, rousing up and rubbing his eyes: "a lady to see me at this time of the evening—what is her name, James?"

"She would not give me any name, sir," replied the servant; "merely said she wished to see you on particular business."

"What a nuisance!" cried Mrs. Travers; "when you were just getting a little rest that you need so much. It is too hard that you should be annoyed at such a time. Walter, I declare, I would not see her! Let James tell her you are engaged."

"Well, you see, my dear," said the doctor, struggling into an upright position, "it is probably an urgent case, or the poor woman would not call upon me at so late an hour. Where is the lady, James?"

"She is in the library, sir; I thought it was uncertain whether you would see her, and told her so."

"Go to her and say that I will be with her in a minute."

When the servant had left the room the doctor said to his wife:

"I declare, I must have been dreaming, Lucy; I thought we were at Brauxholme again, walking by what used to be poor Mrs. Moreton's cottage, only quite a different person lived there then—some one whom we did not recognize at all. Well, I must not keep this lady waiting any longer." And with these words the doctor left the room.

He crossed the hall, and entered the library.

As he closed the door behind him, a woman, dressed in black, rose from the chair on which she had been sitting, and throwing back her veil from her face, advanced to meet him.

As the light fell upon her features, Dr. Travers retreated a few steps.

"Good Heaven!" he cried, in astonishment, "am I still dreaming, or is it Mrs. Moreton?"

"You are not dreaming, doctor," she replied, in the old familiar tone, as sweet, but somewhat more melancholy than ever. "It is she whom you knew as Mrs. Moreton."

"Why, my dear, good creature," said the doctor, advancing and taking both her hands in his, "this is indeed a joyful surprise! We—we thought you were dead!"

"I sometimes think it were better if I had been," said Kitty sorrowfully.

"Better—nonsense, nothing of the sort," said Dr. Travers. "But don't let us stay in this cold room; come in at once to Lucy; you must have an immense amount to tell us, and she will be delighted to see you."

He took her by the hand as he spoke and led her towards the dining-room.

"Let me go in first," he said, when they reached the door, "and break the news to my wife; she is so much attached to you, and we have talked over your fate so often, that your sudden presence might upset her."

"Lucy, dear," said he, entering the room, "the lady who desired to see me is an old friend, one to whom we are both tenderly attached, but whom for some time we have mourned as taken from us."

"Good Heavens, Walter!" cried Mrs. Travers, "you must mean Mrs. Moreton?"

"I do indeed," said the doctor, "she is restored to us—she is here!"

And the next moment Kitty was in her friend's arms.

"Now sit down at once," said the doctor, placing her in an arm-chair close by the fire. "Have you dined? Will you have nothing to eat? No! well then you must have a glass of port wine. Nonsense, don't deny me; I insist. You know my way of old; if my patients don't take what I prescribe, I withdraw from the case. There, that's better," he added as she placed the glass to her lips, "and now, then, tell us all about yourself. That is, if it will not pain you to do so."

"No," said Kitty, with a slight struggle, "I came for that purpose; or, rather, I came to ask your advice and assistance, and knew that I could not expect either without giving some account of what you must have considered my strange disappearance."

"My dear friend," said Dr. Travers, leaning forward and touching her lightly on the hand, "pray divest your mind of any such idea. In the intimate relations established between us and you last year, we conceived for you an attachment and esteem which nothing could shake. If you have anything to ask of me, and you prefer to be silent as to what has happened to you within the past few months, ask—with a certain conviction that if it be possible, it will be granted."

"No," said Kitty, suddenly, "it is due to you that I should tell you all! And not merely that—I must speak. I must relieve my mind; I feel as if further silence would kill me, and I thank the merciful Providence that raised up for me such friends as you, to whom I can confide, in the perfect knowledge that my confidence will be respected, and that what I say will go no further."

"More than that, Kitty," said Mrs. Travers, calling her friend for the first time by her Christian name; "you will find us friends who will sympathize with your sufferings, and do all in our power to alleviate them."

"They have been somewhat great," said Kitty, pressing her hand. "It has often struck me you must have thought it strange, considering the intimate terms which you permitted to exist between us, that I never spoke to you of my antecedents, or indeed of my actual condition of life, at the time I was a resident in your house. You knew not whether I was wife or widow, and in your delicacy you asked me no questions. I ought to have spoken then, but my tongue was tied. There is no such restraint upon me now, and I will tell you my story."

"I was the only daughter of a small farmer in Surrey, a man who had been rich once, but had lost his means. He took pride in me and gave me an education above the average run of that given to girls in my position. When I was about the age of nineteen, I made the acquaintance of a man—a gentleman he seemed in appearance and manners—whom I had seen occasionally from my window passing across the fields. He told me he was staying with a shooting party at a neighboring country-seat, and had been much struck with me. I, in my turn, was fascinated by him, and we used to meet frequently. He professed great love for me, and at length asked me to elope with him. I refused—I had more strength of mind than he thought—telling him I would never bring disgrace upon my father's name."

"Then he consented to marry me at a town some five-and-twenty miles away, where neither of us were known, on the condition that my father pledged himself to secrecy. So it came about. I was madly in love, and my father, who would have done anything to secure what he imagined to be my happiness, agreed."

"The plea which my husband offered for the course was, that his uncle, whose fortune and title—for he was a man of rank—he expected to inherit, was a woman-hater, and never would forgive his nephew, if he married."

"My husband's name is the only thing I shall conceal from you in this story; there is no necessity for me to mention it, and I have striven, as far as possible, to forget it."

"He was a bad man—shifty, thriftless, and dissolute. We lived together for a few months, sometimes in London, sometimes in odd country places, a precarious, hand-to-mouth existence, for he was a gambler, and had no resources, save his winnings at betting and at cards."

"Then he told me it would be necessary for me to leave him for a while, and bade me settle myself in some retired place, where he would send me, from time to time, such money as he could, and come to see me when he had the opportunity. I chose Brauxholme, and settled myself there, as you know, but he sent me very little money, and up to the time when I knew you, he had never been to see me."

"His uncle was dead, and he had inherited the title; but the old man, suspicious of his nephew's character, left his money elsewhere."

"My husband still wished for some reason or other—I never could make out exactly what—that our marriage should be kept a secret; and though I repeatedly urged him to make it known and let me live with him as his wife, he always refused."

"One day—I shall never forget it—the very evening after you left Brauxholme, he appeared at the cottage. He had been away for sometime on the Continent, and had returned, he said, poorer and more pressed by debt than ever; there was a way by which he could get rid of all his difficulties. He named it to me, but I scarcely have the courage to mention it to you, so base, so shameful was it."

"Well, then he proposed that I should renounce my position as his wife, in order that he might marry again—marry a girl with riches, who was devoted to him!"

"How horrible!" cried Mrs. Travers.

"What an infernal scoundrel!" said the doctor.

"I need scarcely say that I refused the proposition with contempt," continued Kitty; "and directly I did so, he changed his course, pretending that he had merely asked me as a joke, and to try whether I still cared about him, adding, that in a very short time he would return and take me from Brauxholme to live with him as his acknowledged wife."

"Fool that I was to believe him. He came back; finding that he could not rid himself of me by fair means, he must, during his absence, have conceived a most diabolical plan, which he at once, on the very day of his arrival, proceeded to carry into execution."

"He lured me to the edge of the cliff, and, under pretense of calling my attention to something below, he—I can scarcely say the words—thrust me over the cliff!"

As she spoke these last words, a strong shuddering fit swept across her, and she covered her face with her hands.

Mrs. Travers rose from her chair, and facing round to Kitty, took her in her arms.

"Be comforted, dear," she whispered, "you are safe here now."

"Yes," said the doctor; "but how on earth did she get here after that act of murder on that villain's part?"

"From the time I felt the thrust which precipitated me over the cliff," said Kitty, "I knew nothing until I found myself lying in bed in a small but neat room, overlooking a portion of a pretty town, built on the seashore. A grave, elderly man and a motherly-looking woman stood by the bedside, watching me with some anxiety. After looking at them a little time, I strove to speak, but the gentleman held up his hand in admonition, and the woman smiled and laid her finger on her lips, and after I had heard the gentleman say, 'She will recover now; I will write and tell him so to-night,' I relapsed into unconsciousness."

"When my senses returned to me I was in the same place, but the woman only was present."

"From her, at various intervals, I learned that I had been brought to her house in a senseless, speechless, and, as it was thought, almost dying condition. I had been borne there in a litter by some sailors belonging to a yacht, the owner of which, an American gentleman, had desired that every care should be taken of me, paying the woman liberally, and giving an address at the Yacht Club, Torquay, where he desired her to write to him frequently and inform him of my condition."

"As soon as my strength permitted, I questioned the woman as to the state in which I was found. She knew nothing of it, she said; but she gathered, from what the gentleman said, that I must have fallen from some height, and after the examination by the surgeon, who was sent for immediately, he expressed some surprise that no bones were broken; my nervous system, however, had experienced a severe shock, and brain fever set in. I lay ill for weeks, hovering between life and death; and during this period the American gentleman came over, it appears, several times from Torquay to make inquiry after me, and see that I was properly attended to."

"From the time of my recovering consciousness, my strength slowly returned, and in a few days I was able to sit up. One morning the woman told me that the American gentleman was below, and wished to know if I would see him."

"Of course I said 'yes,' and he came up. A tall, good-looking man, about thirty years of age, with the kindest face and sweetest voice imaginable. After five minutes we seemed to be friends of long standing. He told me that as he was sailing round the coast, just off Brauxholme, he had discovered, through his glass, something hanging midway down the cliff; that eventually this something had proved to be my helpless body, which he and his sailors managed, with much difficulty, to

rescue from its perilous position, and that he had had me conveyed to the rooms where I found myself.

"I cannot describe to you the manner with which all this was told, nor the delicacy with which Mr. Hoyt—that is his name, Wilbur C. Hoyt—made light of the obligation under which he had laid me, nor could I describe to you the curiously instinctive way in which he gathered that there was something in my story which I fain would hide, and how quietly he accepted my position, as it then was, without inquiring for any details of my previous life.

"He begged me not to think of quitting the apartment; and, indeed, it would have been impossible, for my strength had but very partially returned. He supplied me with books and fruit and flowers, and came over several times to see me, always treating me with the greatest respect, as though I had been some friend of his family who had been confided to his care.

"At length, one day, I told him that, now that my strength was sufficiently recovered, I must no longer be a burden on his kindness.

"He looked up suddenly, somewhat pained, as I thought, and begged me to explain my plans.

"Then I spoke out frankly, telling him that my past life must be a blank, even to him who had preserved it; that I was destitute, and could in no way hope to repay him for all that he had done for me, but that for the future I had kind friends in London who would help me on. Meanwhile he had won, and must be content with, my eternal gratitude.

"Mr. Hoyt was silent for a moment after I had ceased speaking."

"Then he said: 'He accepted the position, perfectly; that he had never attempted, by word or deed, to intrude upon my confidence, imagining, he scarcely knew why, that there was something in my story which I desired to conceal, and expressing, in the kindest words, his full conviction that whatever I might have suffered was owing to no fault of mine. He was only too delighted,' he said, 'to have had the opportunity of being of service to me, and all he would ask of me in return was to tell him the names of my friends in London, and to let him hear, from time to time of my welfare.'

"I ventured to name you, dear friends. I thought there was no harm in that; and Mr. Hoyt said that the doctor's name and fame were quite familiar to him.

"Then he took his leave; and the next day he wrote me a delicately-worded letter, enclosing a bank-note for my expenses to London, and begging me to consider that in him Providence had raised up for me a friend only too glad to be of service to me on and in every possible occasion."

"What a noble fellow!" said the doctor, jumping up, and rubbing his hands.

Mrs. Travers said nothing, but sat gazing intently on Kitty, the tears streaming down her face.

"Well," said the doctor, "then you came straight away here?"

"Only by slow degrees," replied Kitty, "for I had over-judged my strength. I made short journeys, resting by the way, and only arrived in London this afternoon. I need scarcely say that I came to you so soon as I had secured a lodging, and unpacked my things."

"Secured a lodging!" cried the doctor, looking round in ludicrous amazement. "What does the woman mean? These are your lodgings;—this is your home—you are never going to move again from here, I can tell you."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Travers, putting her arm around her friend; "the rest of your life will be passed with us."

"We will talk of that presently, dear friends," said Kitty, with a grave smile; "but now, tell me what you had heard of me. Of course, Mr. Harvey had written to you?"

"Of course he had," said the doctor, "and written to us in the most agonizing state of mind. He and all the villagers thought you

had been murdered, and your body thrown into the sea; for when Hannah, your dumb servant returned from Pollington, whither, it appears, you had sent her for a holiday, she found the cottage in a state of the greatest confusion—boxes and drawers ransacked, and their contents thrown out on the floor, and no traces of you to be discovered. The neighbors searched the shore and the cliffs for days, and at last were compelled to give in to the general belief, and mourned you as dead. However, here you are safe and sound, thank God, and here you will remain. I will just ring and send round for your baggage; this lodging must be given up at once."

But Kitty laid her hand upon his arm and looked up into his face.

"You used to say I was a very obstinate woman," said she, "and in that respect I am just the same since my illness. Those lodgings must not be given up, and I am not coming to live here to be a burden on your bounty."

"Our bounty?" cried the doctor. "Don't we owe you more than we can ever repay?"

"Is not my recovery due to your nursing?" cried Lucy.

"I know all your kindness," said Kitty; "but I wish to be independent, and to earn my own living."

"Earn your own living!" repeated the doctor; "earn your own fiddlesticks! Do you want to be a governess at a shilling an hour, or buy a sewing-machine and take in plain needlework?"

"Neither one nor the other," said Kitty; "but I think I know of a position in which I may support myself, and be of some good to others. When I was in attendance on Mrs. Travers, at Brauxholme," she continued, turning to the doctor, "you were pleased to speak approvingly of the way in which I discharged my duty."

"Approvingly!" cried the doctor. "I should think so, indeed; the softest step, the lightest hand, the sweetest manner, the most unwearying attention I ever found in all my experience."

"If I really possess these qualifications," said Kitty, "why should they be wasted—why should I not earn my bread by undertaking the professional duties of a nurse? In your practice, you will have many opportunities of recommending me to patients."

The doctor was silent for a moment.

"Have you considered this fully, dear—do you mean it seriously?"

"Most seriously," she replied.

"Then," he said, "I think you are a noble woman about to enter on a noble career—we will talk of it further in the morning. Now you must retire to bed. I will walk with you to your lodgings."

"You will do nothing of the sort," she said. "They are quite close here, in a small, quiet street, at the back."

"You shall not go by yourself," said the doctor. "I will send James with you, and tomorrow we will discuss your future."

Before Kitty retired to her rest that night, she fell on her knees and thanked the Almighty Father who had preserved her life to be, as she hoped, of use and benefit to her suffering fellow-creatures.

CHAPTER XI.

KITTY'S VISITORS.

On the following morning, Kitty arose early and set herself to get her room into something like order.

It was not a very satisfactory task, for, though the apartment itself was clean, and to a certain extent comfortable, there was no glorious view of sea and sky, such as she had been accustomed to. The window looked on to a small dull street, of unpretending houses, through which there was but little traffic, and which was consequently, the chosen resort of organ-grinders and all kinds of itinerant musicians, but she bustled about, and by the exercise of that wom-

anly taste, and neatness, which she possessed in the highest degree, soon rendered the little place so pleasant-looking that when Dr. Travers arrived he could not help expressing his astonishment at the air of comfort which pervaded.

"Just like you, Kitty!" he said, looking around him with a pleased smile; "just the way you used to manage in that little band-box of yours at Brauxholme. I verily believe that if you had remained with that rascally husband of yours, and he had been sent to prison, as he undoubtedly would have been, sooner or later, when you went to see him you would in a few minutes have made his cell as cosy as a lady's boudoir."

"Don't talk about him; don't mention him, pray," cried Kitty, with a shudder.

"I did not do it thoughtlessly" said the doctor, taking her hand, and looking at her with grave affection out of his dark hazel eyes. "I did it purposely. But for the present, I want to talk to you about something else. The determination which you announced to us last night, was it a sudden thought, or was it one which has been for some time on your mind?"

"It came to me during my long hours of convalescence, and which seemed to be sent to me by Providence."

"And you are still determined to abide by it?"

"If you and Mrs. Travers see no objection. You are the only friends I have in the world, with the exception, indeed, of Mr. Hoyt, and by you I will be guided in everything I do. Do you approve of my plan or not?"

"For the present, yes," said the doctor. "There are a great many cases coming within the range of my experience, in which a woman like you, with your qualifications, would be invaluable as a nurse; and since your independence of spirit is so great that it will not allow you to live with us, I shall be enabled to put you in the way of earning an excellent living for the present, and so long as you may require it."

"That will surely be for the remainder of my life," said Kitty, with a smile.

"I am not so sure of that," said the doctor, looking hard at her.

"You are mysterious, dear friend," said Kitty. "Why not speak out plainly to me?"

"Well, you see, my dear Kitty," said the doctor, with rather an embarrassed air. "I am so engrossed in my professional practice and studies, that I do not give much attention to anything else; but Lucy is a woman of wonderful observation, and she must evidently have something in her head, though she has not told me what it was, for when this morning we naturally began talking about you, in the course of our conversation, Lucy several times touched upon the horror of your position in being bound to this man who has treated you with such barbarity."

"It is done, and can not be undone," said Kitty with a sigh; "it is my lot and I must bear it."

"Only with your own free will," said the doctor. "If the world were aware of the horrible cruelty practiced upon you, the law would see you righted."

"You mean that I could get a divorce from him," said Kitty. "Oh no, no. To do that I should have to make public his name, and all my miserable life's story—and what would be the use, I ask; what would be the use?"

"Use!" said the doctor, eyeing her very hard; "it would enable you to prevent him from claiming any of the savings which you may acquire in the profession which you propose to undertake."

"He will not attempt that," said Kitty; "he is base enough, but not bold enough to attempt to cross my path again. Moreover, he thinks me dead, and there is but little probability of his ever hearing that I still exist."

"It would have yet another advantage, Kitty," said the doctor; "it would enable you to marry again."

"That would be an advantage, indeed," cried Kitty, with flashing eyes and head erect, "and one which I should have, no doubt, a speedy opportunity of proving. A woman

with a dim and shadowy past, of which she dare not speak, and with a position of hospital nurse for her future, is not likely to receive many tempting offers of marriage, even if her taste lay that way, which mine does not. No, dear, kind friend, we will not, if you please, enter upon this subject again. Let the past be forever dead to me, and let my future of woman's work open for me as soon as possible."

"Your wishes shall be obeyed, Kitty," said the doctor, as he took his leave. "I will see to it at once."

When the doctor had gone, Kitty fell into a reverie over his proposition, from which she was roused by the entrance of the servant, bringing her a card.

On this card was printed the name "Wilbur C. Hoyt."

"Mr. Hoyt!" cried Kitty, in astonishment; "why, how in the world did he find out I was here? Of course, I shall be delighted to see him: bid him walk up at once."

"You are very welcome, Mr. Hoyt," said she, when that gentleman appeared; "not less so because so totally unexpected. I am curious to know how, in this great city, you managed to discover a person so thoroughly unimportant as myself?"

"There is less of magic in it than there seems in the first glance, Mrs. Moreton," said Wilbur Hoyt, smiling, though in rather an uneasy manner. "I happened to be passing by, and saw your friend, Dr. Travers, whose appearance was known to me, coming out of the door and getting into his carriage. Recollecting you had mentioned his name, a sudden idea struck me that you might possibly be living here; I knocked, sent up my card, and was fortunate enough to find you."

"That was quite a coincidence," said Kitty. "I had no idea you were in London. When did you leave Torquay?"

"Torquay? Let me see—Thursday week," said Wilbur.

"Thursday week; that was the very day I left Waterbeach, only doubtless you came through at once, while I rested at several places on the way."

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Hoyt, "that accounts for it."

"Accounts for what?"

"Nothing," cried Wilbur, with manifest embarrassment. "I beg pardon, Mrs. Moreton; the fact is, I am rather absent sometimes; you must have noticed that I have a habit of thinking aloud. And you are better?"

"Oh yes, thanks; I am quite well now."

"And you have found your friend Dr. Travers, I see?"

"Yes, he and his wife received me most kindly, and they have consented to the new scheme of life which I proposed for myself and I am to enter upon it at once."

"New scheme of life!" said Wilbur Hoyt, bending forward; "and what might that be?"

"I did not mention it to you before," said Kitty, "because I did not know whether it was practicable to carry it out; but you have shown such kindness to me that I have no right to withhold any confidence from you. I am going to be a sick nurse."

"You, Mrs. Moreton? You are not jesting with me?"

"No, indeed, I am speaking the plain and simple truth. Probably you doubt my qualifications for the position," she continued, with a smile; "but, then, recollect you have only seen me as a patient."

"I allow you full qualifications for everything that is sweet and kind and womanly," said Wilbur Hoyt, with earnestness; "I could imagine but few public positions, in which you would shine to more advantage. If my voice betrayed a tone of astonishment, it was prompted by the idea that you should voluntarily seek an occupation that must entail upon you work to which you may physically be unequal, and which may be distasteful in its kind."

"You seem to forget that I have my living

to gain, Mr. Hoyt, and that, provided it be honest and honorable, I must not be fastidious as to the means by which my bread is earned."

For a moment Wilbur Hoyt made no reply, sitting with his face averted, and evidently struggling with some strong internal emotion.

Then he turned to her, with pallid cheeks and quivering lips, and said:

"You embolden me to speak to you sooner than I had previously intended—to tell you what has been growing in my heart from the moment that I first saw you, pale and deathlike, lying senseless in my arms on the face of that fearful cliff. From that moment, almost until the present, I may be said to have been watching over you. I have seen you struggling back from death to life; I have marked your quiet sufferings, your patience under pain, your fortitude and resignation. I am a rough man, and ordinarily not observant, but no touch of your womanly sweetness has been lost upon me. Do not draw back, Mrs. Moreton, but hear me to the end; believe me, all I say is true and honest and straightforward. If you knew any friends of mine, they would tell you that I was a strange, unimpressionable creature, wandering and Bohemian in my tastes, and the last man on earth to be influenced by a woman. Hitherto they have not been wrong in this estimate of my character; my mother died young, and I was my own master at an early age, and have knocked about the world without much chance of coming under any softening influence. I should not quite know how to frame my speech to a lady under ordinary circumstances, much less in a matter of this kind; but what I want to convey to you is this, that I love you very dearly, and I have come to ask you to be my wife."

"Do not answer me now," he added; "I have taken you by surprise. I had no intention of declaring myself thus suddenly, though the desire has been for some time in my mind; but I cannot bear to think of your taking the position which you speak of, and—say, will you have me, Kitty? I feel I cannot live without you! The night that you left Waterbeach, I too started for London. I came straight on, trusting to chance to find you. I have walked up and down in front of Dr. Travers's house, and have behaved more like a maniac than a rational being. This kind of passion is worse with me, perhaps, because I never suffered from it before—will you take pity on me, and be my wife?"

Her face had no more color in it than his, as she looked up.

"I might tell you," she said, "that what you ask is impossible, but you merit greater confidence than that. I owe you a debt of gratitude which I can never repay, and"—

"Do you think it is on that ground I appeal to you?" he asked, indignantly.

"I know it is not," she said quietly; "I believe fully and frankly that your feelings for me are as you state. How should I requite the kindness you have shown to me, if I were to accept you at your word, and taint your future life?"

"Taint my future life!" he repeated; "you are mad. I make no inquiries as to your past; I know you to be an angel of purity and honor."

"Let my past rest," she said, shaking her head sorrowfully. "There is no dishonor, I trust, but there is misery enough. Listen, Mr. Hoyt: I am a married woman, and so far as I know my husband is alive."

He recoiled for a moment. Then looking suddenly up, he said: "So far as you know, then, he may be dead, or if not dead in fact, dead to you; I mean that the law might interfere between us and release you from him."

"I do not say that might not be, but do you think that I would come to you on those terms? Do you think I would suffer your friends to point the finger of scorn at you? Do you think I could bear to see your generous heart lacerated by the taunts and jibes of the world? Hear me now, once and forever: Let this subject be dropped henceforth between us, and let

me go my way and fight for my existence in the great battle of life, resting assured that there is no one whom I esteem more highly, whom I think of with deeper regard than yourself."

She rose as she spoke, and gave him her hand.

He took it, pressed it to his lips, and went slowly away.

CHAPTER XII.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

THE house which had been engaged for Sir Frederick and Lady Randall was situated in Park Lane, overlooking Hyde Park, and was a very splendid mansion. Of the quantity and quality of the furniture, it is sufficient to say, that it had been ordered by Mrs. Adams herself, who had astonished the respectable British upholsterer by instructing him to "fix" as much gilt moulding, and blue velvet, and looking-glass as the rooms would possibly bear, to lay down carpets so thick and soft that you could not hear on them the foot-tread of anyone, "no more than if he had got his Arctics on," and generally to complete the decorations in that floridly expensive style, which is only to be seen in certain *parvenu* drawing-rooms, and in the Quarter Breda, sacred to the Parisian cottages.

The well-bred upholsterer, who was a man of taste, had received an excellent education, and when out of his business, lived in capital style, smiled inwardly as he took the order, but proceeded to have it executed exactly as it had been given.

It was nothing to him, so long as the money was sure, and of that there was not the smallest doubt.

Money, money everywhere; a plethora of wealth brought over by these newly enriched republicans, to which even the highly charging, largely paid tradesman of London were unaccustomed.

Such a trousseau for the bride, such triumphs of Parisian millinery, such hats and bonnets, such brocaded silk dresses, so stiff and strong that they stood on end by themselves, with trains of such enormous length that though Minnie managed them artistically, her father was always getting his feet involved in them, and was never able to approach within a quarter of a mile of his daughter whenever she was in full dress.

Such jewelry—huge bands of gold, with two or three large precious stones set solidly in the midst of them; such writhing snakes, with glowing, ruby eyes, or sparkling emerald eyes, and tails, and scales glittering all over with brilliant gems; such pale pink coral necklaces, and diamond horseshoe brooches, and all sorts of valuable ornaments for watch and waist-belt.

Money inside the house, in the furniture, as has been already stated, and money galore outside. In the stables, such splendid horses; the pick and pride of the most celebrated London dealers; heavy horses for Sir Frederick's brougham, and light, elegant ponies for milady's phaeton, saddle-horses, taught to prance and caper in the park, drawing the attention of all spectators, but, in reality, safer and easier than an arm-chair; hunters, and strong, steady horses for night work.

Mrs. Adams walked through the house when all was finished, and looked at everything, and pronounced it all to be "real elegant." Hiram P., with his hands buried deep in his trousers' pockets, and with his hat on the back of his head, did the same.

"I have done this," he said, "on the square; there ain't been no dickering about it. I have footed up the bill, and it reaches high. I guess Sir Frederick, baronet, can't go back on me, or say there is anything one-horse about what I have done for him."

Sir Frederick did not make any complaint on that account.

For the first few months after his marriage,

he thought he had never been so happy in his life.

He was a vain man, and it was a source of intense gratification to him to find that his bride was universally admired, and the mere fact of the possession of money was sufficient to give him positive pleasure. He had suffered so many privations, had gone through so much mental misery in shiftily scheming and calculating how the next meal was to be provided, that, to know that he was not merely beyond the reach of such griping penury, but there were in his pocket-book crisp, rustling Bank of England notes which he might handle, in his purse bright gold pieces, which he could count, was to him an actual delight.

He walked through and through his own fine rooms, gazing at the furniture, the pictures, and the ornaments, with the conscious pride of a proprietor, and seemed never tired of dwelling upon them himself, or of calling them to the attention of his friends.

And all this was to Minnie's explicable joy.

She had been very happy during her honeymoon in Paris, but had dreaded the return to London, lest her husband be taken with old friends and old companions, and fall back into some of his early ways of life, of which, you may depend, she had not failed to be informed.

Such a course of conduct, she knew, would not merely make her intensely miserable, but would infallibly tend to bring about a rupture of the friendly relations then existing between her father and Sir Frederick.

For Hiram P., though ordinarily easy-going and affectionate, was a stern and implacable man, when, as he imagined, anything like a breach of morals was involved.

In his own domestic life, as is the case with most American citizens of his class, he had been pure and loyal, and though, as his wife has said, he was frequently in the old days, in the habit of sitting about the hall of the Crittenden House, Titusville, he was a strict temperance man, and never touched a card in his life.

He idolized his daughter, too, from the bottom of his heart; and if he had found that she was in any way neglected by her husband, who at the same time was running into evil courses, the wrath of Hiram P. would have been great, and would certainly have made itself felt.

But Minnie began to think that she had been anticipating evil unnecessarily, for the first few weeks after they returned to London, and took possession of their new home, were as happy as possible.

Sir Frederick was out a great deal in the daytime, it is true—at his clubs, he said, and at various places of business—but in the evening he either took her to the theater or remained at home to help her entertain her company.

For they had a great many visitors, and already knew quite a large number of people; and when they threw their house open in the evening, as they did two or three times a week, the rooms were crowded.

The English nobility was very sparsely represented; but there were French counts, and German baronets and Spanish marquises in scores, and they were most of them very distinguished-looking men, particularly about their hair and beard, and they wore little scraps of ribbon at their button-holes, and some of them had jeweled orders round their necks.

Some of them, too, but not many, brought ladies with them, whose style of dress alarmed Minnie very much indeed, and caused Mrs. Adams to utter sundry strong ejaculations, smacking more of her early life in the outspoken oil regions, rather than of her more recent experiences in polite society.

And Minnie noticed with surprise, somewhat touched with regret, that very few of her own countrymen and countrywomen visited her, and that such of them as did come never returned.

The Secretary to the American Legation, who is known as the most courteous and the kind-

est man in London, came to one of Lady Randall's receptions. He was observed to start as he entered the room and look round. But it was only for a moment; he recovered himself directly, entered into conversation with his hostess, and made himself remarkably popular generally; but, though constantly invited he never went again to Lady Randall's house, and has always endeavored to blot that evening from his memory.

Did Lady Randall heed all this? She was an odd mixture, which was not, however, very uncommon, being both sensitive and high-spirited at the same time, and she would undoubtedly have been hurt or wounded to indignation at the affronts thus negatively put upon her, had it not been for her devotion to her husband and her great delight in noticing with what apparent steadiness he was conducting himself.

There was indeed a card-table set out in one of the rooms, which was greatly patronized by many of the distinguished foreigners, with whom Sir Frederick would occasionally take a hand; but he laughingly told his wife that they played for very low stakes, and, to do him justice, he never seemed to be elevated by success or depressed by failure at the end of the evening.

Not that Minnie would have minded very much, so far as she was concerned, if her husband had continued his old habits of card-playing and betting.

It would have grieved her because it would have inevitably have come to her father's ears, and she knew how severe the old gentleman would have judged such a lapse from his stern code of morals.

But so long as there was no question of any other woman in the case, so long as she felt her husband's heart was her own, and that he was not playing her false in any way, or attempting to intrigue with any one else, she was content.

The doubt, from which her mind had never been entirely free before her marriage, came with thousand-fold violence over her on her wedding-day, when Dick Phillimore had made that futile attempt either to hinder the ceremony or to impart to her some important information, she never could clearly ascertain which.

But from that moment Sir Frederick's kindness had been unexampled, and he had never alluded, in any way, to that strange rencounter at the church door.

Nothing farther had ever been heard of Dick Phillimore; and Minnie, if she thought of him at all, imagined that what her husband had said about his having been mad, had really some foundation.

Did there not rise up between Sir Frederick Randall and his present happiness a memory of the clouded past—a thought of one who had been to him gentle and loving, even as Minnie was; who for his sake had borne neglect and solitude and poverty, and whom he had basely and brutally betrayed? Did not Kitty's pale face rise up in wrathful accusation against her would-be murderer?

No—not at least for many weeks after his marriage. He had been so accustomed to drug and dull his conscience by vain sophistry, that he had succeeded in reducing that usually relentless monitor to a state of perfect quietude.

In the interval between his flight from Brauxholme and his marriage, he had indeed suffered such tortures of apprehension and remorse as he had never known before; but these vanished under the consolation of Minnie's love, and under the gratifying effects of the new position which he occupied, and of the wealth of which, for the first time, he found himself possessed.

The time, however, was at hand when his short-lived happiness was about to be shattered—when the trumpet call of conscience was to startle him from his fancied security, and to ring loudly in his ears and through his soul, with a power for which he had never given it credit.

One night he was lying asleep, when he suddenly heard that fearful shriek which Kitty had uttered, as she disappeared from his sight over the edge of the cliff. There was no mistaking it, it was exactly the sound which he remembered so well, which had rung in his ears for weeks after the occurrence. It pierced his brain like an arrow, and set his heart throbbing violently.

In the utmost terror, he sat upright in bed, with the perspiration pouring in great drops down his forehead.

Minnie, aroused in her sleep, gazed at him in affright.

"What is the matter, Frederick?" she cried.

"Heavens, how pale and troubled you look!"

"Did you not hear it?" he cried, seizing her by the arm with a trembling grasp; "did you not hear it?"

"Hear what, dear?"

"A scream—a loud, long, piercing scream."

"You must have been dreaming, Frederick. I heard nothing; or, even if there were a scream, it probably came from some drunken person in the street. Go to sleep, again, dear, and forget your fright."

He muttered something to the effect that he would do as she suggested, and turned away. He tried to follow her advice; he closed his eyes and shut out all external objects, only to render a thousand-fold more bright and vivid—a thousand-fold more grim and ghastly—a thousand-fold more repulsive and horrific what was passing in his guilty soul.

See now! For an instant tired nature asserts her sway, and under the influence of bodily fatigue he loses consciousness and slips away into the land of dreams. Ah, what feverish visions haunt the murderer's pillow! There is Kitty, as he first saw her, smiling at the window of her father's farm-house, in all the attractive grace of youth and rustic beauty! She swims towards him with a gliding motion, and laying her head on his breast, and putting her arms round his neck, tells him that she has come there to him, her sole and sworn protector.

By her side, suddenly and incomprehensibly, appears the gaunt form of Hiram P. Adams, extending his bony hands filled with bank-notes, which, on the sleeper's attempting to clutch them, changed into dry, crisp, rustling leaves, or black, powdery tinder.

They are all gone now, and the scene is changed. He is by himself on a wide wild heath; on it the stunted bushes, growing here and there, are black and charred, as though some devastating fire-storm had recently swept across its surface. What is that in its midst? A gaping chasm, black and cavernous as the mouth of hell! It looks dark and dangerous, but he has an indefinable longing to approach it. This strange shape, too, bent and crooked, yet with something of a woman's outline, beckons him luringly onward! "What is this," the hag says, as she points with her skinny forefinger: "To thy fate, Frederick Randall! To thy fate!"

He hears and strives to pause, but the hag clings to him, and floating by his side, urges him towards the cavern. On a sudden flashes into his mind a chance for liberating himself. As they near the edge of the pit, he seizes his companion by the throat, and hurls her into the abyss. As she falls, and ere she disappears from his sight, her face changes, and in place of the hideous features come Kitty's pallid beauty and agonizing eyes.

He would shut it out from his sight, but his attention is riveted by another apparition. Up-rising from the pit comes an enormous serpent, with many undulations, hurrying towards him. He turns and flies; but the serpent is upon him; he sinks beneath the pestilential vapor of its fiery breath, and as it twines itself round and round him, he, writhing in horror, turns, and finds in its flat head, laid so close against his own, the mocking features of Richard Phillimore.

His last chance has passed—so the serpent hisses in his ear; he makes one supreme effort to elude its grasp, and with a smothered cry he

wakes, and sitting up, gazes in trembling terror round him.

His wife slept peacefully by his side. He bent down, and gazed hard at her, as though, in his guilty conscience, fearing that the influence of his dream had extended to her, but her breathing was soft and regular, and her sleep calm and untroubled as that of a child.

Then he stole from his bed and crept into the adjacent dressing-room, where, unlocking a dark-oak bureau, he took from it a bottle of brandy, and filling a wine-glass to the brim, swallowed its contents.

He drank another, and another; then with tottering footsteps, returned to his bed and soon fell into a heavy, stertorous slumber.

From that night a fatal change came over Minnie's home life; and she, who had been so happy, began to experience all the misery she had dreaded—ay, and more than she had ever imagined could have fallen to her lot.

Under the influence of the haunting terror which now, whenever he was himself, never ceased to rack him, under the burning stings of his accusing conscience, which so long drugged and deadened, now seemed to have awakened with gigantic power, Sir Frederick Randall lapsed at once from the decent life he had been leading, and sought to drown his fears in dissipation of the wildest kind.

He drank freely and constantly; passed night after night away from his home, and when he returned there in the early hours of the morning, his unsteady footstep, and his manner, which was sometimes coarse and brutal, sometimes loud and boisterous, would betray the depth of his potations.

Even in his sober moments, and at such times as he was at home, his treatment of his wife was entirely changed. Gone were the pleasant smile, and the soft voice; vanished forever the caressing manner, the delicate attentions, so lavishly paid. Sometimes he would sit for hours, silent and moody, gazing vacantly at nothing, inwardly brooding over the one terrific event of his past life, and wondering whether it would ever come to the knowledge of man. At another time he would be savage and wrathful, breaking forth into wild outbursts of rage, and upbraiding Minnie, if she ventured to speak to him, in the bitterest terms.

Poor Minnie! her life was indeed changed. The idol of her adoration had been upset from its altar, and proved to be made of very common clay; the man whom she had so worshiped, whom she had invested with all the attributes which in her girlish romantic ideas appertained to his ancient lineage and high position, stood revealed to her affrighted gaze now as a brutish sot, now as a reckless savage.

Minnie had that strong horror of the effects of drink which is universal among the better classes of the American people, and it was with difficulty that she suppressed the loathing which crept over her, when, after waiting through the weary watches of the night, she would see her husband return from such associations and companionship as she did not dare to think of, either helplessly intoxicated, or with his worst passions inflamed by excess of liquor.

And her misery was such that it must be borne alone. There was no human breast which she could make the depository of her secret sorrow. In her heart there yet lingered a spark of hope that the sun of her happiness had not set, but was merely obscured by a fleeting cloud. The man who had been so devoted and so chivalrous, could not have changed his entire nature thus suddenly, and Minnie thought herself that even should all other things fail, there was one event impending which must, assuredly, bring him back to the paths of decency, and to her side.

But with that natural keen perception, Minnie felt that did but a breath of her husband's irregularities reach her parents' ears, there would immediately ensue such an outburst of virtuous indignation as would render Sir Frederick more desperate than ever, and do away

with any chance of his reformation. She felt that if she could have talked the matter over with her mother and father, telling them just as much as she chose, and concealing from them the worst features of the case, it might have been possible for her to obtain from them such remonstrance and interference as would have been of good effect.

But Hiram P. Adams and his wife were no longer in England.

A cable message, containing information as to the state of certain bank and railway stocks in which that eminent American citizen was largely interested, had caused him to return somewhat precipitately to his native land, accompanied by his wife, who, as they were in the habit of saying in commercial circles, "was the better man of business of the two."

On the subject of her worries, it was impossible for Minnie to communicate with her parents by letter; so she kept her sorrow locked in her own bosom, reckoning but upon one chance for its alleviation.

That one chance was, that there had arrived to her the sweet consciousness that she was about to become a mother.

In that new phase of existence, she hoped not merely to find interest and pleasure surpassing anything she had hitherto experienced, not merely to find occupation capable of weaning her thoughts from the contemplation of the misery which had fallen upon her, but a very charm to which that misery should succumb, and at the exercise of which it should fade away, without leaving a trace behind.

Surely to the potency of that spell even Frederick's recklessness must bow. In the birth of their child he must acknowledge the strength of the tie existing between them, and replace her in that position as empress of his heart and sharer of his confidence, from which she had been so cruelly, and, so far as she could see, so capriciously removed.

But even this chance was but a remote one; months must elapse before its effect could be proved, and during that interval, Minnie knew, from what she was already beginning to feel, that her health would be broken, her spirits depressed, and that at the very period when she most required support and consolation, she should be left lonely and friendless.

Nevertheless she strove to bear up as best she might against the grief which oppressed her, and was struggling on ever, hoping against hope, when an event occurred by which the whole current of her future was turned.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BRACELET.

Among those persons in the earlier period immediately following Lady Randall's marriage and establishment in London, who were in the habit of appearing at her receptions, there was one lady who, from her social position, stood apart from all the rest. This was the Countess of Wilmington, who, though a widow, and of advanced age, still maintained a reputation for being one of the brightest women in the higher circles, and one to whom access and introductions were eagerly sought by all those desiring to be considered within the pale of the best society.

Sir Frederick Randall's mother had been a distant connection of Lady Wilmington, in whose house she had occupied a position as part companion, part governess, and had always been treated with great consideration and regard.

When Laura Savill, as she was called, was married to Mr. Randall, the intimacy between her and her grand relation was not broken off, but continued until the day of her death, some years afterwards.

Of Frederick, when a boy, Lady Wilmington used to take much notice, admiring his good looks and his precocious ways. Mr. Randall being very poor, her ladyship's purse was drawn upon for the boy's education; and when he became a young man he still enjoyed, and might have continued to enjoy, a vast amount of her favor.

For Lady Wilmington being essentially a woman of the world, did not look with any horror upon the various frivolities and amusements, albeit not strictly moral, which were incidental to youth. It was only when she found that her *protege* was associating with low people, and that the style of his dissipations was such as is not tolerated among gentlemen, that her ladyship's purse-strings were drawn, and the good-looking young man who, since his boyhood, had been a constant inmate of the Wilmington mansion, Grosvenor Square, found its doors closed against him.

For several years, during the time he was pursuing his career of shiftless debauchery, Frederick Randall

heard nothing of his early friend. He wrote to her on his accession to the title, knowing her conservative feeling, and hoping that the fact that he was entitled to take his place among the old families would restore him to her regard. The old lady, however, took no notice of his letter, and Sir Frederick neither saw nor had any communication with her until after his marriage.

But when all the world was talking about the extraordinary luck of that scamp, Sir Frederick Randall, in marrying an American heiress, and raving about the beauty of the girl and the wealth of her parents, the Countess of Wilmington's curiosity was so strongly excited that she could not resist writing a letter to Sir Frederick, recalling old times to his memory, and stating her intention of calling on his bride.

The visit was duly paid, and the Countess returned home delighted. Sir Frederick had gone off, she thought, in appearance, and lost that freshness and frankness which formed an essential portion of his good looks. There was a strained, worn look about him, which spoke of dissipation, the old lady said, and argued but little for his wife's happiness; but with Minnie, Lady Wilmington was enchanted. She admired her earnest face and slight, girlish figure; she declared on her return that she had never seen a Frenchwoman better dressed than Lady Randall, while Minnie's perfect frankness, and simplicity of manner, much impressed the old woman as the world as evidences of the highest breeding.

An invitation to Grosvenor Square followed immediately, and Lady Wilmington had the satisfaction of finding her verdict indorsed by all who saw the beautiful American bride. Sir Frederick was much gratified at the unmistakable effect his wife created, and very much astonished at the cordiality with which he himself was received by a number of men who, for the last few years, had deliberately ignored his existence, but who were now delighted to take him by the hand and to beg him to present them to Lady Randall.

Of course the Countess of Wilmington was invited to Lady Randall's reception at Park Lane, and equally of course she went; but like many other persons, only on one occasion. The old lady's high breeding was not proof against the horror which she felt at the persons with whom she found herself surrounded—a horror which she did her best, ineffectually, to conceal.

She sat on a sofa at the extreme end of the room, keeping Minnie by her side as much as the latter's duties of hostess would permit; and, during her absence, gazing at the assembled company through her double eye-glasses in curious astonishment. At the first sound of the announcement of her carriage, she arose from her seat, bade Lady Randall good-night, and took her departure, and, though often invited, never entered the doors again. She pleaded her age, her inability to come out at night, etc., and led Minnie to understand that she would always be welcome at Grosvenor Square.

Lady Wilmington's invitation to Sir Frederick was not so pressing; but then he had never been thoroughly reinstated in her good graces. There was no doubt, however, that for Minnie the old lady really entertained a warm regard which the girl reciprocated, looking up to the Countess as one of her best friends.

Why, then, at the time of her distress, did not Minnie seek for consolation and advice at the hands of this friend so experienced in the world's ways? Alas! she could not do that: the difference between them, both in age and position, was so great, that Minnie felt it would be impossible to open her heart and explain to Lady Wilmington the delicate difficulties which surrounded her, with a possibility of being understood.

She was wrong. There is no greater proof of simplicity and ignorance of worldly matters than to envy those who enjoy rank or riches, and to argue therefrom their position and happiness. There was no one in the world who would more keenly have sympathized with Minnie's distress than this old woman in a brown wig, who had an enormous fortune, and was regarded as one of the leaders of English fashions.

But she had not always occupied that position, any more than she had not always worn a brown wig. There was a time when Florence Wilmington was a beautiful woman, with hair arranged on either side of her face, with plain, Madonna-like bands, as was the fashion of those days; and at that time, all her study in life was to please her young husband, whom she worshiped from the bottom of her soul—to tend the poor and sick among his tenantry, and to do her duty in that station of life in which Providence had placed her.

But after a little, the young Earl of Wilmington grew tired of the dull, respectable "goody-goody" life, as he phrased it, which he led at his ancestral seat of Lumshurst, and took his wife to spend a season in London. Once arrived there he plunged into all the dissipations which the city offered to a man of his rank and wealth.

And then a change came over Florence Wilmington. She saw that her husband, whom she had so worshiped, no longer cared for her, while she was the object of eager admiration by other men; she saw how women, far inferior to herself in beauty, accomplishments, and that peculiar aristocratic elegance which is so necessary for the part, were considered queens of society and she determined, that if spurned by one, she would not be ignored by all, and took her measures accordingly.

By the next season the young and beautiful Countess of Wilmington was the acknowledged reigning belle of London, and the leader of the fashion, described sometimes as a desperate flirt, sometimes as a heartless coquette, but always spoken of as one whose intimacy was desirable, and with whom, if you would stand well in society, it was necessary to keep on friendly terms.

What men made her, she continued to remain. The good, womanly qualities which nature had given her were frozen up and choked by the glistening ice of the world; but their source was still there, and they would have flowed freely at the touch of Minnie's hand.

Only Minnie did not know this; she was simple and unsophisticated, and imagined people to be pretty much as they seemed, so the appeal was not made.

But although the suffering girl could not find it in her heart to take her elderly friend into her confidence, she never ceased to love and respect her. Lady Wilmington's was the one house to which, after her husband had shown himself in his true colors, Minnie took pleasure in going, and she was glad to find that Sir Frederick never made any objection to her doing so.

It seemed a satisfaction to him, in the intervals of his riot and debauchery, to think that he still held some position in society, through the reflected medium of his wife, and that by her his name was represented in one of the most exclusive circles in London.

He did not often propose to accompany Minnie to Lady Wilmington's receptions, being tolerably certain of receiving some very sharp castigation from the tongue of his outspoken hostess, and he had plenty more congenial ways of employing his time.

He had become a confirmed tippler now, and was very seldom sober after dinner time, while his mornings were passed in a helpless, half-maudlin state, endeavoring to pull himself together sufficiently to be ready for the evening's amusement.

One night, the Countess of Wilmington was going to hold a reception of extra grandeur; a royal duke was to be the distinguished guest on the occasion, and all the fashionable world of London was squabbling for invitations.

One of the first cards sent out was forwarded to Minnie, accompanied by a little note from the old Countess, in which she begged, as a special favor, that Lady Randall should come to her that evening. Stories of Sir Frederick's conduct had reached the old lady's ears; and hearing them, she was reminded of the worn and anxious expression of Minnie's face the last time she had seen her. In a private conversation, the girl might be able to school her face, and thus to prevent the expression of her feelings; but the old lady shrewdly thought that by watching Minnie, when she thought that there was no one observing her, and when, consequently, she would be off her guard, her state of mind would be more easily guessed.

To any one young, and without care, such a *fete* as that which she had prepared for his royal highness ought to have afforded the keenest gratification; and Lady Wilmington would watch her young friend, and if she saw the absence of delight, and the presence of weariness, *ennui*, or worse, she would know that the rumors which had reached her ears were not without foundation.

So Lady Randall agreed to go, little suspecting that she was to be the object of so much scrutiny; and to her great astonishment, Sir Frederick announced his intention of accompanying her. In former days, she would have hailed this announcement with delight; even a short time previously she would have heard it with satisfaction, but now it came upon her with dread. She dreaded lest her husband, now always more or less under the influence of drink, should commit himself, and draw down upon himself, and perhaps upon her, the observation, if nothing further, of Lady Wilmington's guests.

Of course she hinted nothing of this to Sir Frederick, but greeted the intelligence with that mournful smile which had taken the place of the frank, free laugh of happier years.

The night of Lady Wilmington's reception arrived, and Minnie was seated at her glass, with Elise, the French maid, who had been with her since her arrival in Europe, long before her marriage, in attendance upon her, putting the finishing touch to her toilet. Sir Frederick had dined out, as usual, but was to return home to accompany his wife about eleven o'clock.

That hour had already arrived, and Minnie was sitting in anxious expectation, when she heard his step at the door. It was not staggering and undecided, as was frequently the case, but swift and hurried.

Minnie turned pale, and unconsciously looked at Elise, who, though there had never been any actual confidence between them, was devoted to her mistress' interest, and pretty well understood the position of affairs in the household.

The next moment the door opened, and Sir Frederick entered the room. His face was flushed, his eyes blazed, and in the impetuosity of his movements there was a scarcely suppressed ferocity which alarmed Minnie greatly.

"This is a pretty piece of business!" he exclaimed, in thick, hoarse tones; "this is a nice thing for a man to come home and find his wife tricked out with jewels and gewgaws, when he has just learned that he is a pauper, without a penny to bless himself—take them off, I say, and don't stand staring there!"

"Frederick!" cried Minnie, half frightened, half angry, "do you know we are not alone?"

"I can see fast enough," he cried—can see that woman there, whom you pretend to call your servant, but who is, in reality, your accomplice. I have no doubt you and she knew about it long ago!"

"Leave us, Elise, please," said Minnie.

Then when the girl had quitted the room, she added: "Now, Frederick, be good enough to tell me what is the matter?"

"Exactly what I said," he cried. "We are paupers, beggars—can't you understand? Just before I left the club I saw the last edition of the evening paper—here it is," drawing it from his pocket; "listen to what it says:"

"Latest from New York, Panic in Wall Street! Suspension of payment by the Reliance Security Bank. Enormous depression in the shares of the Saugatuk Railroad. General commercial uneasiness."

"Who was the president of the Reliance Security Bank? Who was the largest owner of the Saugatuk Railroad shares? Why, your infernally idiotic father,

Hiram P. Adams, who is now a ruined man, who has pulled me down with him in his fall!"

"Frederick," said Minnie, rising with dignity, I cannot sit calmly by to hear my father spoken of in this way. If what you say is true, you ought to feel for him, rather than heap these oburgations upon his head—recollect he has always been a good friend to you."

"Curse him!" shrieked Sir Frederick; "I wish I had never seen him, or you, for the matter of that. No you don't! he cried, as she made an attempt to pass him, "I am not to be put down by those airs of injured innocence and outraged virtue!"

"You cannot expect me to sit quietly by while you say such things of my father," said Minnie; "either leave the room or let me leave it."

"I shall do neither one nor the other," said Sir Frederick, brutally. "It is your duty to sit by and listen to me just as long as I please to talk; and to such a charming creature as you, to do your duty must be only a pleasure. Stand back!—do you hear me? I will show you that I will be master in my own house!"

He had taken up his position between his wife and the door, and as she attempted to reach it, he stood before her, barring her progress, and swaying unsteadily to and fro.

Minnie's blood was up; she drew herself up to her full height, looked scornfully at him, and made straight for the door, until she was within his arm's reach, and then—

Then to his eternal shame and disgrace, be it written, he seized her in his arms, and after a short struggle, flung her heavily to the ground. In falling she struck her head against a sharp corner of a carved oak chair, and lay there stunned and motionless.

Sir Frederick looked down at her for an instant, without a trace of pity in his face.

"I told you I would be master!" he said. "To-morrow morning, when I come to talk to you, I shall find you in a different mood!"

And he left the room.

"What is it, do you say?" said Dr. Travers, some ten minutes after, as in dressing-gown and slippers he stood in his hall talking to a breathless man-servant. "Case of premature labor? My good fellow, I am not an *accoucheur*; you will find Dr. Blacks in Green Street."

"Oh, sir, do come, pray do come!" cried the man; "Lady Randall is so ill!"

"I cannot, my good man, I—stay, Lady Randall, did you say? that must be the American beauty of whom I have heard my old friend, Lady Wilmington, speak so often," he muttered to himself. "Well, it is close at hand, and I will look round and be of what service I can until Blacks arrives. Give me my boots and coat, James! I will go with this man at once."

The doctor was as good as his word. He started off with the messenger, and in a few moments was by Minnie's bedside.

A red mark, already turning to black, on each of her arms, and a broad bruise on her temple, gave the experienced physician some insight into the nature of the case.

"There has been violence," he said to himself; "a domestic row, probably. Who is this lady's husband?" he asked, turning to Elise, who stood by the bedside.

"Sir Frederick Randall," said the girl.

"Sir Frederick Randall," muttered Dr. Travers. "That must be the scoundrel whom I rescued from death in Westminster Jail. I recollect hearing some time ago that he had succeeded to his uncle's baronetcy. He seems to be pursuing his old course with a vengeance!"

An hour afterwards, Minnie's symptoms looked serious.

"Is there no one here," asked Dr. Travers of Elise, "who can watch over her and be about this lady? Has she no mother or female relations?"

"Milady's mother is in Amerique," said the girl; "and she has no other relations, or, indeed, friend. Mrs. Gibbs, the nurse, was to tend her, and she has been sent for."

"Yes, yes," said Dr. Travers, hurriedly. "Mrs. Gibbs would do very well in her way; but there must be some one else of superior intelligence to attend to this case. Here," he added, after scribbling on a piece of paper, "send off a messenger with this directly, to Mrs. Moreton, 24 Park Row. This is a matter," he said to himself, "in which Kitty will be of inestimable value."

The messenger had hardly departed, when Dr. Travers, in the intervals of his attention to the patient, was walking softly up and down the room according to his habit.

He stopped by the dressing-table, on which lay the ornaments which Elise had removed from her mistress's hands, arms and neck, the ornaments in which she had arrayed herself for Lady Wilmington's reception.

What makes the doctor start as though he had been shot?

He bends down over the dressing-table, and from among the glittering mass of jewels, selects a diamond bracelet, and holds it up before his eyes.

"The same," he mutters, after a pause; "the same; I would swear to it anywhere; the bracelet that I gave to poor Kitty at Brauxholme, and which has never been seen since that ruffian attempted to kill her."

"Say, my girl," turning to Elise, "do you know where your mistress got this bracelet—has she had it long?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said the girl; "a long time. It is her favorite ornament; it was given to her by her husband on the day of their marriage."

"Good God!" mutters the doctor to himself, "by her husband? Then I have penetrated Kitty's secret."

at last. Sir Frederick Randall is the man of title who married and deserted her, and I have just sent for her to play the good Samaritan to his suffering wife!"

CHAPTER XIV.

COALS OF FIRE.

In the course of his professional career, Dr. Travers had often been called upon to exercise his judgment in delicate matters, but never had a more knotty point been submitted to him than that which he now felt himself called upon to solve.

He had sent for Kitty, and, recognizing her promptness in all important matters, he knew that in a few minutes she would be there—there in the house of her own husband, the man bound to her by all the ties of law and honor; the man who had not merely basely deserted her, but had endeavored to take her life, and had given her legitimate place to another; and it was out of mercy for that other one that Kitty had been summoned to tend her in her extremity—to exercise on her behalf all her womanly softness and patience—to do for her what there was none of her own kindred to do.

"A very nice mess I've made of it," muttered Dr. Travers to himself; "very. I have always found that there is great common sense in the vulgar proverb, that 'There is no use in crying over spilt milk,' and I rather think that I will not go back from what I have done, but hold to and make the best of it; and I am not sure that out of this apparent blunder of mine I shall not find the means of punishing my quondam friend, Mr. Russell, the convict, now developed into Sir Frederick Randall, the bigamist, and the attempted murderer of his first wife."

"Well, mademoiselle, what is it?" he added, turning to Elsie, who had just entered the room.

"The woman for whom you sent is down stairs and waiting to see you."

"The woman—the lady, if you please, mademoiselle; be good enough to understand that, and let the other servants know that this lady must be treated with every respect during the time she stays in this house. I will go down and see her at once."

In the dining-room he found Kitty, with a rather contemptuous expression on her face.

"You are a good child to come so promptly," said he, laying his hand upon her shoulder. "Have you any idea whose house you are in?"

"Not the least," said Kitty, "except that I gather from the general style of the furniture and decorations the place must belong to some rich vulgarian?"

"Not so," said the doctor; "though I allow you have ample grounds for such belief. This house," he continued, watching her closely, "belongs to Sir Frederick Randall."

All the color left Kitty's face, and the fingers of her hand resting on the table clasped together spasmodically; but she said nothing, and gave no further sign of discomfort.

"And I have sent for you," said the doctor, still watching her closely, "to attend upon Sir Frederick Randall's wife."

He had tried her too far.

The blood came rushing back into her cheeks, and, springing to her feet, she cried: "I will not do it! I will leave this house this instant!" Then, her strength failing her, she sank back into her chair. "Oh, my God! it is too much; you know not what you ask!"

In an instant Dr. Travers was by her side, holding her hand, and speaking to her in that earnest, cheering voice, which always brought her comfort.

"Yes, my dear friend," he whispered, "I know all; but I had no suspicion of it when I sent for you! I have guessed it since; how, I will tell you at some future time. The knowledge I have arrived at has not changed my determination, and must not influence yours. Whatever wrong has been done to you by this lady, towards whom I ask your kindness, has been innocently and ignorantly—I need scarcely remind you that she has no idea of your existence—and, though I have never set eyes upon her until this evening, I feel convinced that, even in these comparatively early days of her married life, she is suffering from the brutality of the man whom she believes to be her husband, and you have so much in common between you."

Kitty was looking up at him with earnest gaze.

"Is she so very ill?" she asked.

"She is very ill," replied Dr. Travers, "and above all things, she will require kindness and sympathy, such as—there are none of her own folks to speak to her—such as you know so perfectly how to render."

"And you expect me to do this service to my enemy?"

"I do not allow that this lady is your enemy at all, Kitty; and, even if she were, you are a religious woman, and know what is said—'Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.'"

"I do not pretend to be influenced by any such spirit of Christian charity," said Kitty, without raising her eyes.

"And yet you showed that you were when you gave up whole days and nights to nurse my wife, who was then a total stranger to you, and were not the obligations of humanity shown, in regard to yourself, by the American gentlemen who found you, and, at the hazard of their lives, rescued you from your perilous position?"

Kitty was silent for a moment; then a shudder passed through her frame as she said:

"You cannot expect me to meet this man?"

"I do not expect any such sacrifice, nor do I anticipate that there is any chance of a meeting between you taking place. From what I have gathered from Lady Randall's maid, it would seem that the couple have for some time lived on bad terms. The brutality

which this man occasionally exercised on you, when you were in his power, does not seem to have diminished; on the contrary, from what I learn, it has increased under the influence of drink, to which he has succumbed. My notion is that in one of these paroxysms of folly, he has made a personal attack upon his wife, and that when he recovers his senses, even he will be so ashamed of himself that it will be sometime before he puts in an appearance."

"But suppose he should come, what should I do!—oh, what should I do!" said Kitty, covering her eyes with her hands.

"Exercise your common sense, my dear child," said the doctor, touching her lightly on the shoulder. "You have plenty of it, and you know perfectly well that this man can do nothing to you by force; on the contrary, he will be more likely to shun you; and—by the way," continued the doctor, ruminating, "that gives me rather a good idea, and makes me more than ever anxious that you should remain here, Lady Randall's room will, at my express orders, be closed against every one but you, the French maid, and the professional nurse; and if Sir Frederick Randall should arrive and attempt to dispute my authority, I live so close that I could be sent for in a moment, and I think I could manage to prove to him that it would be better for him to let me have my own way."

"Tell me, doctor," said Kitty, looking at him inquiringly; "from one or two things which you have said, I have an idea that you know Sir Frederick Randall."

"I have met him," said the doctor, with a peculiar smile, "and think I have influence enough with him to induce him to do what I wish."

"You seem to have that kind of influence with everybody," said Kitty; "and I am not likely to prove an exception to the rule. I will do anything I can to be of service to this lady."

"Bravely spoken, my dear!" said Dr. Travers. "You may depend upon it you will never regret that decision. Now let us go and see the patient."

When they reached Lady Randall's apartment they found it already set to rights by Elise's careful hands. The ball dress, the jewels, and the ornaments had been put away, and the professional nurse was sitting, by the side of the bed, in which Minnie lay, wrapped in a profound sleep and breathing quietly.

The nurse rose on the physician's entrance and made him a little bow. She had not previously been brought into contact with Dr. Travers, as their operations did not lie in the same line, but she had often heard of the great physician, and was prepared to obey him implicitly.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Gibbs," said Dr. Travers. "I have heard of you, and I am very glad to see you here, and to know that Lady Randall is in such good hands. This lady, Mrs. Moreton, is a friend of mine and Lady Randall's, and in the absence of any members of the family, she has kindly consented to remain here a few days, and exercise a general superintendence."

To attain success in the medical profession, a knowledge of diplomacy is a most essential requisite; and this knowledge Dr. Travers possessed in the highest degree. The few words of politeness just spoken had flattered Mrs. Gibbs's professional vanity, and conveyed to her the explanation that no interference with her social position was intended by Kitty's presence in the house; so she smiled graciously on the doctor, and bowed pleasantly to Mrs. Moreton.

"Nothing to report about the patient, I suppose Mrs. Gibbs?" asked the doctor, humoring her.

"Nothing at all, sir," replied Mrs. Gibbs. "She dropped off into a sleep just after I arrived, and has never moved since. By the way," she said, lowering her voice, "did you—did you see this?" and she quietly pointed to the bruises on Minnie's arms and temple.

"Yes," said Dr. Travers, looking hard at her; "exactly; I understand what you mean. I had seen them, and had given orders that no one but you and the French maid, and Mrs. Moreton here shall be admitted into this room—no one, you understand?"

"I understand perfectly, sir," said the nurse. "I thought it might be that way."

"It is that way, I regret to say, Mrs. Gibbs. I think a little cooling lotion, perhaps some plain vinegar and water, might be applied there, if you will kindly look after it."

The nurse nodded, and left the room to fulfill her errand.

Then Dr. Travers turned round and beckoned Kitty to approach the bed.

She obeyed with painful hesitation, but the doctor stepped forward, placing his arm under hers and led her gently to the bedside.

Minnie lay there, her cheeks deathly pale, her eyes closed, her lips apart, revealing her white and even teeth; over the pillow her long, fair hair lay floating in a tangled mass, and one small hand, almost rigidly clenched, was outside the coverlet.

Kitty bent over the sleeping figure in admiration.

This, then, was the girl for whom she had been deserted, to secure the possession of whom her murder had been attempted! Kitty knew this as she gazed down upon her unconscious rival, but no pang of jealousy animated her breast.

"She was not in fault," she thought to herself, "she had no knowledge of my existence—of there being any obstacle to her marriage! Moreover, if it had not been she it would have been another, for such a man there are always women to offer and it was a mere case of barter; he was ready to sell himself to the highest bidder. It is a pity, too," she mused, "that one so young, and, doubtless, so innocent, should have been thrown in Frederick Randall's way."

"She is very beautiful," she whispered, raising herself, from her long contemplation.

"She is very young to have such awful troubles thrown upon her," said the doctor, "and"—

At that instant Minnie uttered a low moan, and shud-

dered in her sleep. The hand which lay outside the coverlet, was unclasped and stretched forward, as though in supplication.

Upon neither of the watchers by the bedside accustomed as they were to scenes of sorrow, were these signs lost, and Kitty, bending down, took the wandering hand in hers and impressed a gentle kiss upon the soft cheek.

When she recovered herself, she saw the doctor looking at her with moistened eyes.

"You are an angel," he said; "I know the struggle that has been going on within you, and am perfectly satisfied as to its results. Now I will leave you with this poor girl. I don't think you will meet with any annoyance from Sir Frederick; but in case you should, recollect I am close by, and do not hesitate to send for me instantly."

When the doctor had taken his departure, Kitty seated herself in the chair by the bedside, which had been previously occupied by Mrs. Gibbs, and pondered over the strange destiny which had brought her there.

That slight and fragile girl, lying there before her had all unconsciously been the stumbling-block in her life, the attraction to which her husband had succumbed, the prize to obtain which he had conceived, and, as he believed, had compassed, the idea of murdering the woman who stood in his way. By that attempted act of brutality, he had entirely obliterated any lingering regard which Kitty might have felt for him. If he had deserted her; if even, as he threatened during their first interview at Brauxholme, he had ignored her existence, and denied that she was his wife, she would still have had for him some remnant of love—she would still have remembered that he was the first who won her young heart in the days gone by, and would have dreaded coming in contact with him, lest the softer feelings of her nature should prevail, and she should place herself once more in his power.

When, however, she realized to herself that that base and cowardly attempt at murder was no act committed on the impulse of the moment, but had been deliberately planned and premeditated, her heart, so far as Frederick Randall was concerned, grew stone within her, and her only feeling towards the man whom she had once worshiped with such devotion, was one of creeping horror and detestation.

So far as Frederick Randall was concerned, was there, then, anyone else whose image, rising before her mind, was dwelt upon more tenderly?

What was the strange psychological influence which induced Kitty, as she sat there, watching the slumbering girl, to think of other persons of American birth, who had recently played a part in her life's drama, to recall the handsome, genial presence of Wilbur Hoyt, to bend forward as though listening to his kindly voice, then to throw herself back in her chair, and clasping her hands before her, to sit musing over her last interview, to recall the noble offer which he had made to her, the brave, respectful manner in which he had accepted her rejection of him. Ah, it was hard to give up such a wealth of love as that, to make up her mind, for duty's sake, to pursue her solitary path through life, knowing all the time that such a noble heart, and such a stalwart hand, were at her service, and that their possessor's dearest hope would be to help her in her need.

What a happy woman she might have been, even now, after all the troubles and storms through which she had passed, if she had only the courage to stifle the still, small voice of conscience, and look upon herself as free;—even now, while she was far more fitted to appreciate the generous nobility of Wilbur Hoyt's nature than she would have been in her early youth. His tenderness, his delicacy, his innate, gentle sympathy, would have been wasted upon the young girl, whose maiden fancy had been captivated by the regular features and somewhat vulgar dash of Frederick Randall—what would she not give if—

What breaks in rudely upon Kitty's reverie, causing her to spring from her chair, and with fright imprinted on every feature of her face, to bend forward, turning her head aside and listening eagerly?

A man's voice, the well remembered tones of which thrill her with shuddering horror—the voice of Frederick Randall, high pitched and angry, such as Kitty remembered in it the early days of their marriage, when creditors were clamorous, and money was short.

The voice seemed approaching; then she heard quick, heavy footsteps coming nearer and nearer. Great Heavens! what shall she do? She had only time to throw herself on her knees and busy herself with the fire, when the door opened, and, without seeing him, Kitty was aware of her husband's presence.

"There," he said, in a loud, defiant tone, and with a short laugh. "I don't want to come in, I don't want to disturb you, nurse, nor any of you, but, by the Lord, I will show that I am master here! Pretty thing, indeed, where a French maid is to forbid me my own room, telling me it's by the doctor's orders. I should like to see any doctor interfere with me! How is your patient, nurse?—getting on pretty well? I don't want to interfere with you; and without waiting for an answer, he turned on his heel and left the room, banging the door after him.

With his laugh of defiance still on his lips, Sir Frederick Randall went swaggering down the stairs into the dining-room. He walked up to the massive oak sideboard which stood at the end of the apartment, and unlocking it, took out a small queer-shaped bottle containing brandy, and was just about to pour out some of its contents, when he felt a touch on his shoulder.

The butler, who had long since gone to bed, and left the house in charge of what he called "the medical people," had turned down the gas before going, and there was very little light in the room.

Sir Frederick, turning sharply round, could make out that he was confronted by a gentlemanly-looking

man, but could not discern his features. "What do you want?" he asked, sharply.

"You," said the stranger.

The abruptness of the tone nettled Sir Frederick, who exclaimed:

"Do you know who I am, sir?"

"Perfectly," said the other; "shall I tell you? No. 201 in Westminster Jail. Russell, the forger—Randall, the wife murderer!"

"Hush! for God's sake," cried Sir Frederick, holding up his hands in agony; "who are you?—how came you here?"

"I am Dr. Travers," said the stranger, "in attendance on the lady who believes herself to be your wife."

"Travers," repeated Sir Frederick—"Travers?" Where have I heard that name before?"

"You have heard it mentioned by your legitimate wife, whom you sent to live at Brauxholme; but it was not as Dr. Travers you first knew me. You knew me as Walter King!"

"Walter King?"

"Ay, Walter King, the surgeon of the Westminster Jail! On a certain eventful night in your life, you made to Walter King a promise—do you recollect what it was?"

"No," said Sir Frederick, hesitatingly; "I do not recollect what it was!"

"Men of your stamp seldom do recollect such matters—I will remind you of it. When, in my mistaken pity and compassion, I aided in the subterfuge by which you escaped the legal sentence you were suffering, you swore to me that you would repent and reform? How have you kept your word? By heaping crime upon crime, until the worst of all is reached, and you stand forth a murderer?"

"Murderer!"

"Ay, black even among murderers—assassin of her whom you had sworn to cherish and protect, and from whom you received nothing but love and devotion."

"How do you know this? How do you dare to"—

"Silence man, and do not provoke me, but listen to what I say. I tell you at that time that if you broke your word I would give you no second chance, but would hunt you down—now I mean to do it."

He lifted his hand as he spoke, and shook his forefinger solemnly in the air; then turned round and walked slowly away.

Sir Frederick Randall gazed vacantly before him until he heard the slamming of the street door, and knew that his dreaded visitor was gone.

Then with a shaking hand, he poured out a glass of brandy, and swallowed it with a gulp. "Hunt me down, will he," he said, as, after turning out the gas, he walked slowly up the stairs, "I defy him! What proof has he of—of—what he talked about? Who could ever bear witness against me that—Oh, my God! what is that?"

He fell back against the wall as he spoke, and stood with fixed eyes glaring at a female figure with a lamp in its hand, which coming out of his wife's room, crossed the corridor and disappeared.

Frederick Randall uttered no loud cry, his tongue seemed paralyzed in his mouth, his heart seemed to turn to ice within his body, and muttering feebly, "Kitty's ghost!" he fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE ASYLUM.

WITHIN ten miles of London, and distinctly visible from one of the great lines of railway traffic, situated on the summit of a hill, and which forms an appropriate crowning ornament, stands a magnificent mansion. Passengers by the train, lifting up their eyes from their newspaper or their novel, as they are whirled rapidly by, and glancing through the carriage window, might take it to be the ancestral seat of some great nobleman, or what in these leveling times is more likely, the newly-erected mansion of some mushroom millionaire.

It has that appearance now, as it stands out square and clear and cold in the soft, spring moonlight. It is surrounded by gardens, beautifully kept, has out-buildings and barns and stables; everything speaks of the enormous expense at which it must be maintained.

But if instead of being merely whirled by in the train, you had made a closer inspection of the grounds, you would have found that the walls were high, and difficult to climb, and guarded at the top by sharp, iron spikes, so arranged as to prevent the possibility of their being surmounted; that all the lower windows, and many of the upper, were fitted with strong bars; that the doors were lined with sheet-iron, and that inside and outside the house, trained and vigilant sentinels were constantly on the watch.

Sometimes, in the dead silence of the night, there would ring out upon the ears of these watchers, a shrill shriek of maniacal terror, a yell of savage fury, a burst of hopeless, helpless laughter, and occasionally, but very rarely, there would be wild sights within the walls as well as wild sounds. Men, possessed of abnormal strength, and lashed with purposeless fury, battling like wild beasts with those employed to restrain them; women, whining over the lost infant taken from them years before, but still ever present in their distracted thoughts, or clamoring hoarsely against the treachery of men by whom they had been betrayed; for the magnificent mansion is the county asylum, and of its inmates, nine-tenths are mad.

Midnight clangs out from the bell of the little chapel forming part of the premises, and one of the warders, who has been dozing over the fire in his little room, for the evenings are still chilly, starts out to make his rounds.

As he passes down the corridor, he pushes down a

movable trap in every door and peers curiously into each cell. As the light of his lamp flashes through the aperture, some of the occupants raise themselves on their elbows and stare at him through their blood-shot eyes—now with fright, now with anger; others curl down before the blinding glare, and bury their heads beneath their pillows, or cover them with their tossing arms.

For all who are awake, the warder has a kind word, and of many he makes inquiries as to their condition; some answer shortly and abruptly, others babble so long and so incoherently that he is compelled to terminate the interview by wishing them good-night and closing the trap-door; but in one instance he differs from his usual mode of proceeding, divesting himself of his lamp, at some little distance from the cell, and proceeding to the door cautiously on tiptoe.

With all the warder's cunning, however, the occupant of the cell is a match for him. He has not been asleep; he is wide-awake, and actively engaged in working away noiselessly at something in the corner of his cell. No sooner does the officer's stealthy footstep fall upon his ear than he suspends his operations, and creeps quietly to his truckle-bed; the next instant he has flung himself upon it, has pulled the heavy blanket over him, and with his hands folded beneath his head, is in the semblance of a sound sleep.

Through the window, which, though situated at an unusual height from the ground, is glazed and not guarded, the rays of the moonlight strike into the cell and fall upon the recumbent figure. From the outside the officer opens the trap in the door very sharply, and looks in. From the couch comes the noise of hard stertorous breathing, and the warder, glancing thither, sees outlined on it the loosely lying limbs and shrunken frame of his patient.

"This quiet fit still continues," he mutters to himself. "I don't think we shall have any more trouble with Dick for sometime to come."

Another glance, and satisfied that all is correct, he softly closes the trap, and goes on his way.

Then the man on the bed, first clearing the blanket from his ears, and then raising his head inch by inch, struggles into an upright position, and listens to the retreating footsteps. As they die away in the distance, he slips noiselessly from the couch, and as the moonlight's rays fall full upon his upturned listening face, he stands revealed as Richard Phillimore.

It would have taken, however, much more than a cursory glance to recognize in this quaint, fantastic, figure, the jovial Dick Phillimore of former days.

Gone were the ruddy complexion, the rotund form, the large and massive limbs; the hair was still short and stubby, but iron-gray instead of black in hue, and the fat and pendulous nether lip, which in former days hung out as an unmistakable sign of the good living to which it was accustomed, now shrunken and drawn, quivered with nervous uneasiness, and in the teeth marks, with which it was covered, bore witness to the agitation to which it was the victim; the very shape of the head seems to have changed, to have become narrow and more compressed, the cheeks have fallen in, the cheek-bones have formed huge hollow settings for the brightly blazing eyes; the once rounded chin has become peaked, and the shoulders that stood out so bluff and square, have fallen away, and go sloping off at an angle like those of any boarding-school miss.

This was some of Sir Frederick Randall's work. When, at the door of the church, on the occasion of his marriage, he struck his quondam friend and associate to the ground, he little thought that the statement which he had made to his wife, to account for Dick Phillimore's incoherent ejaculation and attempt at interruption, of the ceremony, was about to be verified.

When the bystanders raised the maimed and bleeding man, and conveyed him to the hospital, it was found, not merely that his limbs and skull were fractured, but that in his then enfeebled and dissipated state, the shock to the nervous system had been so great that it was more than a matter of doubt whether his mental faculties would not be forever impaired.

As, bit by bit, he recovered his bodily strength, it began to be more and more evident that this view of the case was correct, and that Richard Phillimore was mad.

After a little time these symptoms increased to such a degree, that he was moved from the hospital to the asylum, where we now find him, and where he was regarded as one of the regular inmates, incurable and not to be discharged until death would give him his release.

Contrary to his previous character, while in his right mind, which, though loose and dissipated, had been kindly and easy going, Richard Phillimore's madness was of the cruel and savage type.

When he was first brought to the asylum, he was a raving maniac, whose wild fury rendered it dangerous for any one to attempt to approach him, and whose life seemed to be one paroxysm of passion, without an intervening period of quiet. Had the poor fellow possessed the strength which characterized him in happier days, it would have been necessary to keep him under the closest confinement; and even as it was, and, although the rule of the establishment was to allow patients freedom and kind treatment as was consistent with safety; it was for a long time found necessary that Richard Phillimore should be deprived of the opportunity of making violent use of his limbs, and that he should be guarded day and night.

As time wore on, this excessive and continuous fury seemed to die away, recurring at irregular intervals of two or three weeks, and then lasting for a day or two, in all their former strength. In the interval between them the patient lapsed into a state of the profoundest dejection and melancholy, from which nothing could rouse him. He would sit still, silent, and motionless, partaking of but little food, and either incapable of understanding, or persistent in his refusal to answer any question that might be put to him.

Yet, even in a state of madness as distressing, and apparently as hopeless of cure as this, there seemed to be some method. The warders of the asylum noticed that in his periodical outbursts, his fury seemed always to be directed against the same person. Not one of them, nor any one connected with the asylum, but some one whom the unfortunate man had known in his former life, and who, though his lips never pronounced the name, was always present at such times.

To get at this object of his rage, against whom he uttered the most frightful threats, was Richard Phillimore's great desire. In his adjurations to the keepers not to stand between him and his prey he would become most rational; but when the fit was over he would lapse into the same melancholy state as before, and nothing could rouse him till the next attack.

It chanced that about this time there occurred a change in the administration of the asylum, and the new superintendent, Dr. Hudson, who was informed by his retiring predecessor of the peculiarities of Phillimore's case, took great interest in them, and made them the subject of special study. In the course of his study, it occurred to the new superintendent, who was comparatively a young man, unfettered by the doctrines of the old school, that there were times when Phillimore's brain-power returned to him, lucid intervals, during which his memory of past affairs returned, and he was capable of appreciating what was passing round him.

Dr. Hudson mentioned this idea to two or three of his colleagues, and was laughed at for his pains. They held that Richard Phillimore was undoubtedly mad, and must remain so until his death; and the warders and keepers were of the same opinion.

But Dr. Hudson was right. Not merely were there times when Richard Phillimore recollected the past, and was cognizant of the present, but in these lucid intervals he was invested with a kind of sly cunning, not uncommon with those whose insanity is partially intermittent. This cunning prompted him to conceal any improvement in his condition from his attendants. He knew that he had been mad for months, that he was still liable to occasional accessions of maniacal fury, and that no representation which he might make of his restoration to reason would be regarded as anything else but a delusion; the only way, he argued, to obtain his liberty, was not to attempt to prove his sanity, but to bring his wits and faculties to work, whenever he had the command of them, to devise the means for successfully escaping from the asylum.

What use was liberty to Richard Phillimore? In the place where he found himself he was kindly treated and watched over; and life to Richard Phillimore, with his broken health and wrecked fortunes, could scarcely have any zest. Why, then, did he so hanker after liberty and freedom?

Because, once obtained, they would enable him to carry out the one object of his existence, the one idea which, waking, or sleeping, mad or sane, never ceased to haunt him—the desire for revenge on Frederick Randall; for the blow which he had received at the church door remained burnt into his brain. When these frightful paroxysms came upon him, in which he struggled with his attendants with the strength and ferocity of a wild beast, it was Frederick Randall's form that he saw before him; it was Frederick Randall's throat that he longed to clutch! Once let him wreak his vengeance on that man, and he would be content with any fate which might await him—to be brought back to the asylum even, to be taken to the scaffold, was all the same to Richard Phillimore. In ridding the world of Frederick Randall he would have accomplished the object of his life, and would have been careless as to what became of him.

To hoodwink the officers of the asylum, then, it was necessary that he should keep them in ignorance of anything like improvement in his condition; and he succeeded so well that he was unsuspected by all save Dr. Hudson.

In these lucid intervals, which became more and more frequent, he occupied himself wholly with devising the means of escape.

He calculated that if he could reach the window, and succeed in breaking the glass without attracting attention, he could easily squeeze his body through the aperture; but he knew not what difficulties he might have to encounter on the other side. These he was determined to risk, and he applied himself night and day, whenever he thought he could calculate on having some minutes free from observation, to working at the smooth surface of the wall, and endeavoring to scrape therein ledges for his feet and hands.

It chanced that, on the morning succeeding the moonlight night just described, a party of ladies and gentlemen, among whom was Wilbur Hoyt, came to visit the asylum. Dr. Hudson happened to be absent at the time, and they were shown round by one of the assistant superintendents, who dilated with much garrulity on the various cases which he brought under their notice.

When they reached Richard Phillimore's room they found him sitting on the bed, with his hands folded before him, and his eyes downcast. It happened to be one of his best days, when his faculties were all alive; and as he sat there, apparently senseless, he eagerly drank in every word that was uttered.

"No improvement in this case?" asked the superintendent of the keeper in attendance.

"None, sir," replied the man; "except that his wild attacks are not so frequent, I think. He sits there, just as you see him, for days together, never saying a word, and taking no notice of anything."

"This is rather a curious case," said the superintendent, turning to the visitors. "This is a man named Phillimore, a gentleman by birth, and an educated man, who, on his first admission here, was one of our most ferocious patients. Our new superintendent thinks there is some possibility of effecting his cure, but the rest of us are not so sanguine."

"Phillimore?" said one of the visitors. "I know him then; I thought I recognized his face; I used to see him at race meetings and places of that kind, with that man who is now Sir Frederick Randall."

A start and a shiver, which he found it impossible to repress, ran through Dick Phillimore's frame. It was, however, unnoticed by any one; the attention of all being attracted by the lady who said:

"Oh, by the way, talking of Sir Frederick Randall, have you heard the story about him? He married an American lady, you know, a Miss Adams, a country-woman of yours, Mr. Hoyt, and they say he beats and treats her shamefully!"

"Good God! madame," cried Wilbur Hoyt, in horror, "you cannot mean that?"

"I do, indeed," said the lady; "and what is more, it is reported that since Sir Frederick has discovered that his wife's fortune is not so large as he imagined it to be,—indeed, some say that her father is ruined—he has quite deserted her."

"This is, most probably, some exaggeration," said another gentleman. "It was only the other day I saw Sir Frederick entering his house in Park Lane, and I am pretty nearly certain Lady Randall was with him."

"Well, it may be as you say," said the lady, "let us hope it is." Then turning to look at Phillimore added, in a low voice: "And to think that this poor creature once was one of us and enjoyed all the pleasures of society—a sad spectacle, don't you think so, Mr. Hoyt?"

But Wilbur Hoyt was buried in reflection and continued so until the party moved out into the corridor.

No sooner were they gone, than Richard Phillimore, after a glance to see that the trap in the door was closed rose from his attitude of dejection, and paced the room with rapid strides.

"Park Lane," he muttered to himself; "that's where they said he lived; let me repeat that until there is no chance of my forgetting it. Park Lane, and he beats his wife! Oh, Heaven, keep my brain clear and help me in my great purpose, that I may be Thy instrument in ridding the earth of this monster."

The next morning, at a very early hour, Dr. Hudson was aroused by one of the keepers, and five minutes after the alarm-bell on the top of the building pealing forth, announced to those recognizing the sound, that one of the inmates of the asylum had escaped.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON HIS TRACK.

WHEN Colonel Willamette heard his sentence of dismissal from Minnie Adams's lips, he knew that that sentence was final, and agreed to accept it as such. Nevertheless, although he knew perfectly well that his duty lay at home, he could not reconcile himself to the idea of quitting the land in which she was residing, until the actual fact of her marriage raised an insuperable barrier between them; and so, as we have seen, he accepted the offer of a cruise with Wilbur Hoyt, and continued for some time in his friend's society.

These few weeks were not without their somewhat sad and dreary lesson for Henry Willamette. When, through the combined efforts of himself and his friend, poor Kitty had been rescued from her impending danger and conveyed to a haven of safety, the colonel saw, in Wilbur Hoyt's extraordinary solicitude both at the time of the rescue and afterwards, a curious example of the manner in which men, however they may seem to be made of impenetrable stuff, are forced, by the mere laws of nature, which succumb to a woman's influence, even though that influence be passive and not exerted.

There lay Kitty, helpless and senseless, and there, in constant attendance upon her, was Wilbur Hoyt; a man who had arrived at his present years of discretion entirely free and heart-whole, though he had been exposed to various kinds of temptation in various parts of the world, and who yet had become suddenly infatuated, and vanquished by the grace, and perhaps, by the helplessness, of one he had seen but little, and who had never spoken to him a word.

Henry Willamette was, by nature, far more romantically inclined than Wilbur Hoyt, and had his affections not been previously engaged, it would have been quite easy for him to fall in love with a creature so pretty and graceful as the woman that had rescued him from death, the unusual style of the surroundings giving an additional spice to the sentiment. As it was, he rejected silently at the fact that his friend's heart seemed at last to have been touched, and without making any evident sign, did his best to fan the flame which, to his surprise, kindled in Wilbur Hoyt's breast.

At that time, of course, the secret of Kitty's previous history being unknown to him, there seemed no reason why a union between her and Wilbur Hoyt should not finally take place, and Colonel Willamette half-pleased, half-annoyed himself, picturing these probabilities. His pleasure lay in imagining a future so different from that which he had hitherto thought had awaited his dear friend; but his mind was tortured at the thought that no such happiness was in store for him, and that the rest of his life must be passed celibate and solitary.

Time passed on after this fashion until the announcement in the newspaper of Miss Adams's marriage with Sir Frederick Randall broke upon Colonel Willamette's quietude, and sent him once more roving through the world. It was impossible, he felt, to remain any longer with Wilbur Hoyt—he could not condemn his friend to the companionship of a man who was pre-occupied, absent, and dispirited, nor dare he carry out his original intention of at once returning to America. He felt that in the dreary solitude of that old house, on the Hudson River, with nothing but his own thoughts for his mind to dwell upon, he should go mad.

He thought that he would try Paris for a while. In former days he had often enjoyed himself there, and he hoped that the spell would work again; so, pleading business, his best excuse, he took hurried leave of the astonished Wilbur Hoyt, and started off by the tidal train, taking up his quarters, in the first place, at the Grand Hotel.

The Grand Hotel, however, at Paris, like the Langham, in London, is merely a slice of America cut out of the great continent and transplanted to a foreign soil. None but Americans inhabit it; the dishes are American, the hours are American, and among the guests nothing but American matters are discussed—New York and Washington scandal by the ladies, Wall street speculations and Pennsylvania avenue political jobs by the gentlemen.

At one time in his life Henry Willamette had found all this particularly amusing, but now it speedily became distasteful to him. He should have enough of that sort of thing, he thought, when he reached his own home; moreover, the two capitals of London and Paris were now in such constant communication that the gossip of the one permeates at once to the other, and on the second day of his arrival Colonel Willamette heard the circumstances of Miss Adams's marriage with Sir Frederick Randall discussed with a freedom which was anything but pleasant to him.

He was not merely annoyed at the familiarity with which the young lady's name was bandied from mouth to mouth, but was much pained at the manner in which her newly-wedded husband was spoken of, a manner which tended to confirm all the evil things which Henry Willamette had heard about him.

And indeed, was this to be the end of it all? Minnie Adams, whom he had loved as the idol of his life, as the apple of his eye, had refused to listen to his prayer; had plainly rejected him when he sought her for his wife. Well, he was a man, and could bear such a sentence, as it had been borne by hundreds of worthier fellows; but if, in awarding to another the position which he so much desired, Miss Minnie, in her girlish simplicity, had fallen into a trap—if the man whom she had honored by her preference proved to be unworthy of her, proved to be such a dissolute vagabond as common gossip represented him, then Henry Willamette knew that the blow would fall on him with far less severity than on her, whom he would have died to save.

Writhing under the torture of these reflections, the Colonel determined to quit Paris and to make his way home. Once arrived there, he would, he thought, throw himself with such zeal and energy into the task of remodeling his paternal domain, and fulfilling his duties generally as a landed proprietor, that he would have no time to brood over the unsatisfactory past or the gloomy future.

So he started away from Paris by the night mail, and arriving in London early in the morning, caught the train for Liverpool, and proceeded there direct. He thought it very likely that Wilbur Hoyt might be in London, but he would not wait to see him or any other of his friends. The one sad experience by which his whole life had been changed, sat as yet too heavily on his heart to allow him to make it a topic of conversation even with such an intimate friend as Hoyt; and with the others, who were ignorant of the relations in which he stood to Minnie Adams, the recent marriage would undoubtedly have been discussed in a manner which it would have been very painful for him to listen to.

The Cunard steamer "Cuba" was to sail for New York at an early hour the next morning, and her officers, all good men and true, most of whom had some slight acquaintance with Colonel Willamette, were pleased at the sight of his name on the passenger list, and greeted him with a hearty welcome when he stepped on board the next morning. But they were greatly astonished and not a little disappointed when in place of the bright, genial, jovial man of the world who had sailed with them before, they found that the Colonel, for the most part, secluded himself in the solitude of his stateroom, and that when, as at meals and a few other occasions he did come among them, he was polite indeed, and courteous, but moody, silent and pre-occupied.

The ship had a capital run, and arrived at New York within ten days of her departure from England; but as they neared their destination, even before the pilot had come on board, Henry Willamette had again changed his intention. He could not make up his mind at once to encounter the dreary solitude of Crow Nest—his old home on the Hudson River. He thought it would be better for him first to spend a few days in New York, making an excuse to himself that there might be some business for him to attend to there, so he took up his quarters as usual at the Albermarle Hotel; and that evening the frequenters of the Union Club were surprised to see his well known face once more among them.

All hailed him with delight, for Henry Willamette was a universal favorite, and many were the pleasure-plans, dinner parties, and social gatherings of all kinds at once proposed to him.

He accepted them all with avidity; and those who had known him longest and best, were surprised to see the eagerness which he showed in pursuit of amusement of a kind which was formerly understood to be distasteful to him.

He dined out constantly; at his dinner consumed great quantities of wine, and passed the greater portion of the night in the excitement of the gaming-table. Not that Henry Willamette was ever to be found in any of the almost public gambling-rooms with which that city of pleasure is infested, for he was by nature too sensitive to permit any open exhibition of his excitement; but in the private rooms of the clubs, and at the houses of some of the fastest young men of New York he was a constant attendant, and rumors of his varying success at play, and of the large amounts which

he always staked found their way into some of the less scrupulous of the newspapers.

The habits and actions of a young man of position, such as was Colonel Willamette, are not to be hidden under a bushel, in a city like New York; and before long the buzzing gossip was not confined to men of Henry's own set, but circulated freely among his elders.

Many of these gentlemen of high commercial standing and social position, who had been for years intimate with the Willamette family, shook their heads gravely when they heard of the Colonel's proceedings, and expressed their wonder that a man who, for so many years had set such an admirable example to his compeers, and had achieved such distinction in his profession, should suddenly break out into the dissipation of gambling, with all the eagerness of the veriest tyro.

One of these old family friends, a certain Major-General Barlow who, in early life, had been intimate with Henry's father, and who, during the war, had served in the same division of the army with the Colonel, though he was but slightly acquainted with him, hearing at his club some of the floating gossip about the young man, made it his business to inquire further into the matter: and, having satisfied himself that there was some foundation for it, determined, if possible, to take measures for arresting Colonel Willamette in the downward career he was pursuing.

General Barlow was a shrewd old man, with plenty of knowledge of the world. He reckoned that a young man discreetly brought up and hitherto excellently behaved, as Henry Willamette had been, would not suddenly have lapsed from the paths of propriety, without some strong prompting motive. That motive, the General's experience led him to look for in either the loss of money, or the caprices of a woman. The General knew that Henry's fortune was ample, and that it was not for the vulgar sake of gain that he plunged into the excitement of play; but he was entirely ignorant of the young man's inner life, and thought it unlikely that one so good-looking and agreeable should have suffered in his experience of the fair sex. Nevertheless, the old veteran, who could never have been a handsome man, recollected how well he had been treated by the ladies in his early days, and having a large faith in the utter capriciousness of women, thought it possible that Willamette, with all his advantages might have been attacked with some symptoms of the universal heart disease.

In such a case, according to the old general's idea, there was nothing like a change of subject—"one nail drives out another;" to use his homely phrase; and his notion was that if Henry Willamette was laboring under the effects of an unrequited attachment, his recovery would be most easily effected by giving him a new passion to dwell upon.

Nor was the General quite unselfish in this matter. He was a widower, with an only daughter, whose beauty, liveliness, and accomplishments had already obtained for her the pseudonym of "Belle Barlow" in those fashionable circles of which she was a distinguished ornament.

Miss Barlow had plenty of suitors; but they were not precisely of a type which was pleasing to her father. They were mostly young men, possessing an average amount of fortune, which they had acquired, and to which they were daily adding, by transactions in Wall Street, wherein most of their time was occupied. The General, who, as an old soldier, had not had much opportunity of money-making, did not regard the possession of a fortune as a disqualification for his intended son-in-law, but he looked for something beyond.

It was his hope that one to be so nearly allied to him, and to whom he looked as a transmitter of his family honors, should be a man of some birth; not merely a living representative of the powers of shoddy. Henry Willamette was the descendant of an old Knickerbocker family, and, in addition to this inheritance, had won military rank and social distinction. There was no one in the entire list of young men of the day whose alliance could be more desirable; and the General determined to leave nothing undone towards bringing about a match between his daughter and Colonel Willamette.

Nor was Belle Barlow at all disinclined to accept the fate which her doting father plotted for her. She had been an outrageous flirt, as all the maneuvering mothers and other pretty girls who, during the past three seasons, had frequented the rocks at Newport, or the promenades at Saratoga, were ready and willing to testify.

She was a bright, brilliant girl, an excellent dancer, and full of that smart, small talk and social repartee, in the use of which the American ladies so far exceed their English cousins. She could be tender, too, and almost sentimental on occasions; she had a good stock of poetical reading, which she used judiciously; and could make herself, if she chose, agreeable to any style of man.

But Belle Barlow was somewhat tired of the eternal round of dance, dinner, picnic, and flirtation, so far as at least, her position of unmarried girl was concerned; what she would do when she had changed her condition and was duly mated was a different thing.

She by no means proposed to give up the enjoyments of life. No, she would apply herself to them with keener zest when she had taken rank as a married woman. A husband was in her eyes a necessity for every girl who had been a certain number of seasons before the world; and as her father had more than once mentioned to her his desire that she should show herself willing to receive any attentions which Colonel Willamette might make, she acted like a dutiful daughter, and consented. Nay, more, pleased with the Colonel's personal appearance and proud of the distinguished character which she had heard given to him in all quarters,

Belle Barlow rather laid herself open to attract his admiration and bring him a captive to her side.

And Henry Willamette, what was his feeling in the matter? Was the memory of that old love which he had cherished so long and so fondly, and for which he had borne so much, still strong enough to guard him from temptation, or did he suffer himself to succumb to the fascination of the beautiful girl, who showed herself so ready to receive her attention?

Truth to tell, the life which the Colonel had been leading of late seemed somewhat to have impaired that keen sense of right and wrong, which was at one time his most distinguishing characteristic. His thoughts did not advert to Minnie so frequently as formerly; he seemed to have accomplished his object in temporarily banishing her from his mind; and when he saw Belle Barlow evidently inclined to receive with favor any advances he might make, a new idea took possession of him.

Why should he pine away longer in playing the despairing lover to one who had so decidedly rejected him, and who was then, probably, enjoying herself with the husband of her choice. Why should he not let Minnie Adams—he meant Lady Randall—and all the world see, that though refused by her, he could yet be accepted by a girl equally beautiful and standing higher in the estimation of fashionable society.

The delusive demon of pique and slighted hopes had possession of Henry Willamette at that moment, and under its influence he might have fallen beyond the possibility of recovery, but for an incident which occurred when he had been some two months in New York.

One night, or rather early one morning, after a grand ball, at the close of which he had escorted Miss Barlow to her home, he returned to his rooms in the hotel, and putting on his dressing-gown, sat down before the fire to smoke a contemplative cigar before retiring to rest.

He had not yet proposed to Miss Barlow; but during that whole evening he had found her so charming that he had almost made up his mind to pay her a formal call, and ask her hand on the morrow. Never before had he seen her look so lovely, he thought. As he lay back in his chair, lazily puffing at his cigar, the recollection of her brilliant eyes, sparkling with a thousand enchantments and provocations, and the low, tremulous tone in which she had responded to his whispered words of compliment, filled him with soft, sensuous delight.

Once more she seemed to move around and about him; once more he seemed to perceive the subtle perfume peculiar to herself; once more he felt her warm breath on his face. He closed his eyes, the better to realize the creation of his fancy, and immediately sunk into a deep slumber.

Then there came to him a dream. He thought he was at home at Crow Nest on the Hudson, lying in the library in his favorite position, stretched at his length before the huge log-fire; the family pictures on the walls, the books, on the backs of which the firelight danced so lovingly, were all old, well-remembered friends. Presently, on looking up, he saw gliding towards him, whence it came he knew not, a strange, vapory figure which, bit by bit, assimilated into human shape, and took upon itself the likeness of Minnie Adams. Her head was bowed; but as the firelight played upon her face, he saw that the expression was ghastly pale, and very, very sorrowful.

He would have spoken to her, but she raised her hand, and shaking her head despairingly, said in mournful tones:

"You to desert me, too! Were not your last words, on our parting, 'that whenever I wanted you, you would be near me?' How have you kept that promise? God knows your aid is wanted now!"

Then she faded from his sight.

Henry Willamette sprang to his feet. It was broad daylight, and by his side was standing his servant, with a letter in his hand.

"It has just come from the ship, sir," he said; "it was brought over by the purser, and is marked 'special' and 'immediate,' so I thought I would run the risk of rousing you, and not finding you in your bedroom I came in here."

The Colonel took the letter, and opened it with trembling hands.

It was from Wilbur Hoyt, and contained but a few lines. They ran thus:

"MY DEAR HENRY:—The rum or runs through London, that Sir Frederick Randall—you know who I mean only too well—has taken to drink, and under its influence, is treating his wife shamefully. I would spare you details, but it is said that on a recent occasion he forgot himself so far as to assault her. I have just heard from Mrs. Moreton, whose information is undoubted, though obtained in a very curious way, that Lady Randall has been removed from her husband's house, and that there is no chance of them ever coming together again. Knowing you, as I do, I shall not be surprised to see you in London shortly after the receipt of this.

Yours,
W. H."

Colonel Willamette read the last paragraph a second time, and smiled grimly.

"You judge me rightly, Wilbur, old friend," said he. "This fits well with my dream—my place is by her side; but first I must demand a settlement from him."

The next day Colonel Willamette sailed for Europe.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MASKED BALL.

THE statement which Wilbur Hoyt had made in his letter to his friend, Colonel Willamette, that Lady Randall had left her husband's house, was substantially correct.

So soon as the acute portion of Minnie's illness was

over, so soon as her senses returned, and with that recollection of the outrage to which she had been subjected, she felt it impossible to hold any further relations, or even to remain beneath the same roof with one who had treated her with such brutality.

It was a curious characteristic in this young girl's nature, that in this tearing away of the veil from before her eyes, in this shattering of the idol which she had hitherto so fondly worshiped, her feelings underwent an entire revolution. The yielding softness with which she had hitherto borne her husband's neglect and oburgations, was changed into hard, implacable determination; the fond, clinging love, amounting almost to worship, with which she had regarded him, became a positive loathing, exhibited so strangely, that the kindly watchers by her bedside found it advisable, as far as possible, to avoid all mention of his name or any allusion to him.

It was Kitty's bright intelligence, and unwearying attention, that first discovered this alteration in the state of affairs; it was to Kitty that Lady Randall clung as to an elder sister, never satisfied when she was out of her presence, never so happy as when she lay with her own hand locked in Kitty's, looking up, with streaming eyes, into her sweet sympathetic face.

Nor was this sympathy one-sided. Although Kitty had first undertaken the place which Dr. Travers urged upon her, from a mere sense of duty, and with a certain repugnance at the idea of being brought into contact with one who, however innocently, had been the actual cause of the attempt which her husband had made upon her life, and who had supplanted her in his love, it was impossible for her, with her sweet womanly feeling, long to remain unmoved by the helplessness of the pretty creature lying there before her in the balance between life and death, or obdurate to the caresses and attention which, as soon as she became conscious, Minnie lavished upon her.

In the little bedside conferences which occurred between the two, the key-note was often struck which would cause Kitty's nerves to tingle, and so upset her equanimity as almost to render it impossible for her, for the moment, to reply.

"I have been wondering where you came from," said Minnie to her on the second morning of her convalescence; "you seem to have dropped from the skies. It seemed so strange to me, when I came to myself to find you there—you, whom I had never seen before, moving about so softly and so gracefully, touching me so tenderly, and attending to my every wish—and yet it seemed quite natural, too. How did you come here, Mrs. Moreton?"

"I came here at the request of Dr. Travers, who is an old friend of mine, Lady Randall."

"Oh, do not call me Lady Randall!" said the girl, with a flushing face, "do not address me by that horrible name! But you are not a professional nurse, like Mrs. Gibbs—you are a lady, one can see that in every movement, in every word you utter. Where did you learn to be so wonderfully handy and attentive in a sick-room?"

"Such things come by nature, I suppose," said Kitty, with a sad smile; "but I have had a certain amount of experience. I was with Mrs. Travers during a long and serious illness, and it was, doubtless, remembering my management of his wife at that time, that made the doctor ask me to come to you."

"And you came at once; how grateful I ought to be to you and to the dear doctor for thinking of you. Do you know, as I have been lying here, I have often been watching you, when you thought I was asleep, and I have come to the conclusion that"—

"And that is"—said Kitty.

"And that is, that you have seen some great trouble—trouble which you have struggled with, and, to a certain extent, conquered, but which has still the power to throw a dark shadow over your life; there is a certain and subdued sadness in your looks, in all your actions, which tells me that."

"You should not judge by looks," said Kitty, bending down over the bed to hide the tears which were springing to her eyes. "Whatever may have been the trouble of my life, I have gotten over it, thank God!"

"Not so," said Minnie, raising herself in the bed as well as her feeble strength would permit, and throwing her arms round her new-found friend; "these tears prove the contrary. You must not mind my talking to you in this way, for it is not without a purpose. That wedding-ring on your finger shows you to be married, and I feel convinced that your sorrow is akin to mine—what that is, there is no use now in attempting to hide from you."

"Pray do not speak of this," said Kitty, in a trembling voice; "you do not know how you distress me."

"I am right," whispered Minnie, pressing her tightly in her arms. "I only mention the past that I may speak hopefully of the future. So soon as you and Dr. Travers tell me that I can be moved, I shall quit this house, never to return to it. It would be impossible for me, after what has occurred, to remain under the same roof with—Sir Frederick Randall, even if he desired. By his conduct, he has released me from my vows of obedience, though I have no idea that he would still consider them binding. I am rich, or at least my father is, and aught he has, is at my command. You and I will go away together, and never part for the remainder of our lives—will you promise me that?"

"No dear," said Kitty, bending down and softly touching Minnie's lips, "I will not make you such a promise as that, as it would be useless, and worse than useless, on my part. Whatever may have been my trials in the former portion of my life, I have determined to devote what remains of it to doing good to my fellow-creatures, and not to the consideration of myself. Besides," she added, setting her lips tightly and using a strong effort to bring out the words without hesitation, "though this is an unfortunate episode, you must not look upon the happiness of your married life as

ended. Your husband will, most probably, repent his outburst of passion."

"You do not know him," whispered Minnie, clinging to her; "you do not know what I have suffered up to this time—the coldness, the cruelty, the insult, all culminating in this coward's blow. Other men might be sorry for what they had done, but he, never! You do not know him!"

"No," said Kitty, sadly, and with a deep sigh, "that is true, I do not know him!"

And while the two women were thus taking sweet counsel and making common cause together, what was happening to him who had been the bitter curse of both their lives? What was Sir Frederick Randall doing?

Living at a faster rate than ever, and crowding more and more dissipation into the twenty-four hours.

After recovering from the fainting fit into which he fell on seeing what he imagined to be the ghost of his murdered wife, he had his portmanteau packed, and at once removed to a neighboring hotel.

He was not a coward by nature. It is a great mistake to suppose that a bully must necessarily be a coward; and though Sir Frederick Randall was unmanly enough, as we have seen, to insult his wife and even to strike her, he had but little physical fear.

He had confronted death before now, in the hunting-field or within twelve paces of an opponent's pistol-barrel, but in each of these cases the danger that threatened him, and which he met without blanching, was something which he could understand. Not so, this strange, mysterious presence, this haunting spirit, which, at times, he was disposed to believe was but the mere result of his own guilty conscience, and, at other times, regarded as a supernatural visitant.

He would not stay in the house on the chance of meeting it again; of that he was determined. The house, too, now was hideously dull and dreary, the air of sickness pervaded it, no one in it, save Dr. Travers, whom he detested, and the people of the household who crept about with hushed footsteps and solemn faces.

He would be better in the hotel, where all was life and bustle, and where he might come in and go out without being observed. So to the hotel he went.

Once settled in his new quarters, he gave himself up to his wild courses with renewed zest. He found he had been mistaken in imagining that his father-in-law had been at all compromised by the bank and railroad speculations into which he had entered, or the financial ruin must have been averted, for the sum which he was accustomed to receive from Mr. Adams' bankers on the first of every month, continued to be regularly paid.

No man in London, having plenty of money to spend, more especially where he has the advantage of a title, need look far for boon companions.

Sir Frederick Randall, impetuous and shifty, dodging the Jews, and sponging upon everyone he met, was a very different person from the open-handed baronet with money in his pocket, who entertained splendidly, betted and gambled freely, and always paid when he lost. The former was cut universally, the latter was declared, by a certain set, to be the best fellow alive.

Of course this certain set were not persons recognized in good society. They were men with queer characters, and women with no characters at all; but they were bright and pleasant company in their way, and infinitely more amusing to the easy-going baronet than they would have been if they had had more intellect and better morals. With them, he was a kind of king, and in their society, under the combined excitement of late hours, high play, and deep drinking, he was rapidly destroying the remainder of his health.

One day at noon, after a heavy carouse on the previous night, Sir Frederick awoke, and feeling even more shaky and forlorn than was usual for him in the morning, was trying to get down some breakfast when his servant handed him a card. He glanced at it, looked up angrily, reflected for a minute, and then said:

"Tell the gentleman I cannot see him."

"Oh, yes, you can," said a voice outside; and immediately afterwards Dr. Travers entered the room. "Oh, yes, you can; I am sure you will see me on a matter of business!"

"By what right, sir, do you intrude into my private apartment?" said Sir Frederick, rising in great wrath.

"Is this your private apartment?" said the doctor, very quietly, for the servant was still in the room. "I was looking for No. 201, occupied by Mr. Russell; but since you are here, Sir Frederick, I am pleased to have the opportunity of calling upon you."

"Leave the room," said Sir Frederick, turning to the man. "Now, sir, may I ask the reason of this persecution. You know that I am at your mercy, and have come, I suppose, to insult and triumph over me!"

"I have come for no such purpose, Sir Frederick Randall," said the doctor with grave coldness.

"If I had consulted my own feelings, I should never have set eyes on you again, but I come on behalf of that unfortunate lady who believes herself to be your wife, and whom I have been professionally attending."

"She is not dead?" cried Sir Frederick eagerly. He knew that by the terms of his marriage settlement in the event of her death without children the annual income paid to him would cease.

"No," said the doctor, for a moment taken aback by this sudden display of interest. Then guessing at what was probably passing within Sir Frederick's mind, he said, with additional disgust: "She is not dead, and in order to prevent any chance of your doing her any further harm in an excess of rage—and I tell you that through you she has very nearly lost her life this time—she is determined to live separate from you."

"What about the allowance?" said Sir Frederick.

"She must not go writing to her father!"

"You can, I imagine, make yourself easy on that

score," said the doctor. "I tell you candidly, that if Lady Randall had followed my counsel, she would have placed this matter in such a light before her father, that you would have had no further help from him; but, though so young, she is very proud, and she has a horror of the idea that you, whose name she unfortunately bears, should be reduced to the old state of fugitive mendicancy in which she found you."

"Sir!" cried Sir Frederick.

"I speak very plainly to you, sir," said the doctor, "because I know you. By your loud talking you will not frighten me—I am not a dueling man, and if I were, there is no code of honor, I believe, to compel me to go out with a person who has been convicted of forgery. Let us go back to the point, if you please."

Sir Frederick frowned and bit his lip. Then he said: "I don't see that we can live much more apart than we are doing at present."

"Probably not; but Lady Randall intends giving up the house in Park Lane, so far as she is concerned. She has had but little pleasure there, and most of her associations with it are mournful; she intends retiring into the country, and the one condition on which you will continue to receive any allowance from Mr. Adams is, that she shall be unmolested by you."

"Very well," said Sir Frederick, "let her have her own way. By the way, there are a lot of my things there that I must have, you know."

"There are but a very few of the smaller ornaments of the house which Lady Randall cares about taking with her—a list will be made of these, and all the rest of the furniture will be left for you. In anticipation of your compliance with this proposal, Mr. Adams desires that the house should be let, and a tenant has been found who is ready to take it, and to pay you a price for many of the fittings, if he can obtain possession within the next six weeks."

"Deuced sharp work," growled Sir Frederick. The doctor looked at him curiously.

"I should scarcely have thought that you would have been inclined to grumble at much harder conditions," he said. "However that is no business of mine. Am I to understand that you agree to these terms?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Sir Frederick, sulkily. "When will the house be free?"

"It is free now," said the doctor. "Lady Randall has left it some days."

"The deuce she has!" cried Sir Frederick, in astonishment. "Well, then, I may as well move into it, and save my hotel bill. Has she left any servant there?"

"No one but the old housekeeper."

"Oh, well, I will take my man with me and get my meals at the club—I shall be there only a few days, I suppose. I will go up there at once—there is nothing more to be said, I suppose?"

"Nothing," said the doctor, and without another word, he bowed gravely, and quitted the room.

"So I am to be a bachelor," said Sir Frederick to himself, when he was left alone, "with all the freedom and a good deal more money than I ever had before—considering all things, I don't think I have done so badly!"

That night he returned to the deserted house in Park Lane.

Two days after this interview, in the evening, a cab drove up to the door of the Tavistock Hotel, in Covent Garden; a gentleman was on the pavement, eagerly scanning the arriving vehicles, and, as the occupant of the cab stepped to the ground, he seized him by the hand.

"Wilbur!" cried the new-comer, returning his friend's grasp, "this is kind. I scarcely expected to see you so soon."

"My dear Henry," said the other, "I received your telegram from Liverpool and determined at once to meet you. Come into the hotel, now, you must be hungry and tired out."

As they reached the hotel, Henry Willamette leaned upon his friend, and said:

"I am not tired overmuch, or hungry either; but if I were starving and dropping with fatigue, I could not rest until I had accomplished my purpose which has brought me here—the purpose of my life!"

"And that is?" asked Wilbur Hoyt.

"First to punish him; then to succor her."

"I thought those would be your views," said Wilbur Hoyt, quietly; "and I applaud them highly. I am afraid I am not particularly Christian in my ideas on these matters. I look upon this man Randall as a kind of skunk, who ought to be put out of the way; and the sooner the world is through with him the better for us all. Now go to your room, and put on your evening dress; meanwhile, I will order dinner."

They were sitting at dinner, and Wilbur Hoyt, full of pity for the great change which had come over his friend's appearance, was thinking how stern and grave he looked, when Colonel Willamette, bending forward, said:

"Why did you ask me to put on my evening dress? I hope you have no idea of any gaiety in prospect for me? I need scarcely say I am not in the mood."

"I can well understand that, Harry; and yet, I propose to take you to a scene of so-called pleasure. There is a great masquerade to-night at Covent Garden Theater, and I have tickets and dominoes for us two."

"I must decline, Wilbur; it would give me no amusement."

"Probably not; but it will give you some occupation."

"Occupation at a masquerade! What do you mean?" "Exactly what I say. This is just the place where we shall be likely to meet a certain scoundrel, whom you have crossed the Atlantic in search of."

"Ah," said Willamette, with a start, "then I shall go gallily, and if we meet him!"

"Of course you will be with me through the matter?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"No, honestly I do not; but understand, Wilbur, her name must never be mentioned. The provocation must be an insult arising out of some chance word, some accident, of the moment."

"I understand perfectly. In such a jostling crowd as that, it will not be difficult to manage."

When dinner was concluded the two gentlemen strolled into the theater, which, lighted up and beautifully decorated with floral wreaths, presented a very festive appearance. It was early as yet, and there were but comparatively few persons present, so that the two gentlemen retired to a small box on the grand tier, which Wilbur Hoyt had secured, and watched the proceedings.

Therein they remained for one or two hours—Hoyt sufficiently amused in watching the vagaries of the crowd; Colonel Willamette constantly peering round him with eager, strained gaze, apparently in search of some one who did not arrive.

At last he sprang to his feet and touched his friend on the arm, and Wilbur Hoyt knew in a moment that the man was there.

The stalls and pit had been boarded over, and the space thus covered was filled with a seething mass of dancers and promenaders.

"He is there," said Colonel Willamette, bending down, and following the direction indicated. Wilbur Hoyt saw the man with flushed face and brilliant eyes, whom he recognized as Sir Frederick Randall. A female in a rose-colored domino was on his arm.

"Come," said Willamette; and they descended the stairs.

Fate seemed to favor them, for, as they had nearly arrived at the foot of the grand staircase, they were jostled against his companion who were ascending.

The Baronet looked up angrily.

"Take care where you are coming to, sir!" he said, looking fiercely at Willamette; "and don't push against this lady!"

"I am not in the habit of hurting women by pushing or striking them, Sir Frederick Randall," said the colonel, looking straight in his face.

Sir Frederick Randall had been drinking heavily, and his blood was up.

"What do you mean by that, you cursed scoundrel?" he said.

"A gentleman, I believe, neither swears nor quarrels in a lady's presence," said the colonel, with a bow. Then, bending towards his opponent, and whispering in his ear, he said: "I will await you here for the next ten minutes!"

Sir Frederick nodded, and disappeared with his companion.

Ten minutes afterwards, Colonel Willamette rejoined Wilbur Hoyt in the box.

"He is all right," he said, handing him a card.

"Here is the name of the man who will act for him; you will find him in the supper room at table number four. Arrange that we may leave by the seven o'clock train to-morrow morning, cross over at once, and fight on Calais sands."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE AVENGER.

THE postile meeting between Colonel Willamette and Sir Frederick Randall, of which the former had spoken so lightly, had not been arranged with as little difficulty as the colonel made it appear in his conversation with his friend, Wilbur Hoyt. Not that Sir Frederick was any less ready to quarrel, or even to push the quarrel to an extremity, than this would-be antagonist; but it is probably more difficult to arrange for a duel in England than any other country in the world, and this arises from the fact that the few personal encounters of late years have been things to be laughed at rather than wept over, and that a considerable amount of ridicule is attached to the mere idea of a duel.

Sir Frederick Randall, who was, like most men, without any sense of humor, keenly susceptible to the thought of being ridiculed, was equally susceptible to the punctilio of his rank. His moral character might be as bad as people said it was, but he had the dignity of his position to uphold, and it would be impossible, he felt, for him to go out with some unknown man whose social status no one could guarantee.

Moreover, another fatal source of inconvenience was to be found in the rose-colored domino hanging on his arm. This lady had recently made the acquaintance of Sir Frederick, who had taken a great fancy to her, and finding that he was rich, unsparing in his presents, and lavish in his hospitality, she naturally did not desire the occurrence of anything which might threaten to put an end to their intimacy.

And she was wonderfully quick and observant. By many women the rapid, bristling conversation exchanged between the two men would not have been observed, or if observed, would not have been comprehended.

Hortense Carachon was a Frenchwoman who, for the past five years of her life, had been known as one of the wittiest, most audacious actresses on the Parisian stage, and who had been the cause of many desperate quarrels among the hot-headed youths of that gay metropolis, so that although she understood but few words of the English language, her quick intellect, experience, and knowledge of pantomime enabled her at once to perceive what was the purport of the discussion.

Accordingly, when she and Sir Frederick were free of the crowd, on their arrival at the top of the staircase, she turned to him, and speaking rapidly in French, told him that she had followed what he had said to the

stranger, and that she forbade him, if he valued her regard, to proceed further in the matter.

It was an old boast of Sir Frederick Randall's that he never permitted himself to be taken aback or allowed his face to show the emotions passing through his mind, so he turned to his companion with a look of surprise and a half-laugh, and said:

"You fancy yourself quite able to understand English, Hortense, but you are evidently unacquainted with American, and it was in that language that that gentleman just now addressed me. His manner is short and brusque, I allow, but it is manner and nothing more. You will recollect that the vicomte who introduced me to you, told you I had married an American lady—you see I know he told you every thing about me—and the fact is, that that gentleman is her brother."

"The more reason that what I say is true," responded Hortense, "and that he should try to find occasion to quarrel with you."

"There is no question of quarreling at all," said Sir Frederick. "I have, as you know, determined upon separating from my wife, and her brother has come over with a view of making final arrangements. I must devote the next day or two to him and my lawyers, and in a week's time the affair will be finished. Here we are, at the door of our box; let me ask you to excuse me for five minutes; you will find several friends there, and at the end of that time I will rejoin you."

So saying, and having seen his fair companion safely within the box, Sir Frederick bowed and hurried to rejoin Colonel Willamette.

He found the colonel stamping up and down the corridor. The usual coolness of the English baronet, who had by this time sobered down from the debauch of his dinner, formed a marked contrast with the passionate impatience of the American.

"I am here, sir," said Sir Frederick, lifting his hat with special courtesy, "to receive your apology for the double insult you have placed upon me—first, by rudely pushing against my companion, and secondly, by the offensive nature of your words."

"You had better learn then, at once," said Colonel Willamette, "that you are expecting what you never will receive. I am fully prepared to uphold both my actions and my words."

Sir Frederick looked at him curiously. He saw at once that the insult had been premeditated—the duel determined on. For a moment he wondered whether what he had merely given as an excuse to Hortense was really the case; whether this man was really some relation of Minnie's, determined to punish him for his conduct towards her.

A strange thrill ran through him like an electric shock. Was the time really come when he was to answer for all his misdeeds? Was this man so suddenly appearing before him, so desperately intent on the purpose which possessed him, the destined instrument of his punishment?

In that moment Sir Frederick Randall lost his self-control; a feeling akin to that which crept over him when he saw, as he imagined, the ghost of his murdered wife, seemed again to take possession of him; but he quickly recovered himself, and setting his teeth tightly together, turned upon his adversary with furious determination.

"Let it be, then, as you say, sir," he said. "I too, am fully prepared to resist any attempt at being bullied or coerced. You have used language to me for which I demand an explanation—you refuse to give one."

"I will give you any explanation you choose at the end of my pistol-barrel," said Colonel Willamette; "but in no other way."

"I do not see," said Sir Frederick Randall, slowly, and regarding the colonel with hauteur, "that as yet, I should be justified in giving you the satisfaction which you seek. My rank and position in society are well defined; but what of yours?"

"I am an American gentleman—a colonel in the army."

"Everybody is a colonel in the army in America," said Sir Frederick, with a sneer.

"Your sarcasm, sir, leaves me unharmed," said Colonel Willamette. "I hold a commission in the regular army of the United States. I have served not without distinction, I may say, in the recent war. You can make inquiry for yourself. My name is Henry Willamette, and"—

"How should I know you to be the person you represent yourself?" asked Sir Frederick.

"I can refer you to the American Legation," said Henry Willamette, excitedly; "but that would take up too much time for the business I have in hand. My most intimate personal friend is Mr. Wilbur Hoyt, who, as owner of the 'Columbia,' and a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, at Cowes, is well known in the best English society."

Sir Frederick Randall bowed. "I am acquainted with Mr. Hoyt's name, though I have never had the pleasure of meeting him," he said.

"Mr. Hoyt will act for me in this matter. That, I presume, is sufficient reference," said Willamette.

"Quite," said Sir Frederick, penciling on a card. "This is the address of my friend, Major Murdoch. He is at this ball, I know. I will make it my business to hunt him up, and send him to the Army and Navy Club, where, in an hour's time, Mr. Hoyt will find him. We can leave all preliminaries to them."

"All minor preliminaries," said the colonel, "but we may ourselves agree as to the time and place. The time, to-morrow; the place, Calais sands."

"You are somewhat peremptory, sir, in your demands, but I have no objections to offer, so let it be; and, with a grave bow, he retired.

On leaving the American gentleman, with whom he had so strange a rencontre, Sir Frederick was making his way towards his box, when he was met by a tall, bearded man, who, in a low voice, expressed his delight at finding him.

"Just sent to look for you, my dear Frederick," he said. "Hortense is in a great state of mind. Says she overheard a row between you and some stranger, and that there is sure to be murder. I told her it was all stuff, but she would not be pacified until I came."

"There is some foundation for what she says, Murdoch," said the baronet; "and I was just now seeking for you. As I was walking with Hortense, I was insulted by a man, who turns out to be an American colonel. I thought at first, he had pushed against me by accident, but it proved, afterwards, to be an insult given with a manifest purpose, and that purpose to provoke me to a meeting."

"Indeed!" said the major. "What is his object? Did you ever do him a bad turn?"

"His object he keeps to himself, but I have a suspicion of it. However, that is neither here nor there."

"Yes, but who is the man?" cried the major. "You cannot go out with every fellow!"

"This is a gentleman," said Sir Frederick Randall, raising his hat. "He has named as his friend, Mr. Wilbur Hoyt."

"I know," interrupted the major; "good-tempered, hospitable Yankee; man who owns the 'Columbia.' Saw him at the Cowes ball, last August—very decent sort of a fellow—for a Yankee."

"That is the man," said Sir Frederick. "I have told this gentleman, whose name is Colonel Willamette, that Mr. Hoyt will find you at the 'Rag' in an hour's time—you had better go there and prepare for him."

"All right," said the major, "and you get home to bed. I will just step round to Winton's and tell him to prepare Hortense and the rest of them for your absence. Go home and get a few hours' rest; you are a pretty cool hand in these matters, I know by experience; but you have been knocking about a good deal lately, and keeping late hours, and lifting your elbow too much; your nerves are a little unstrung—by the way, did this Yankee say anything about when and where?"

"He was urgent for both," said Sir Frederick. "To-morrow on Calais sands."

"Calais!" cried the major. "What a nuisance! that confounded channel passage always upsets a man, and renders his shooting hand unsteady. However, one comfort, you are a good sailor. Now good-night. I will come on to Park Lane as soon as I have seen Mr. Hoyt, and leave a note with your man, Foster, telling you where to meet me."

The major was moving away, but Sir Frederick called after him, "Stay; wait a minute—is there nothing more to be said?"

"Nothing—nothing, my good fellow," said the major, hastily. "We are tolerably pressed for time as it is—good-night!" and he hurried away.

Sir Frederick remained looking after him until he disappeared in the crowd.

"Murdoch is right, I suppose," he muttered to himself. "I had better go home and get what rest I can, and yet I seem to have the strangest repulsion to going to that house—the strangest desire to do anything, no matter what, to fill up the time and keep me away from it. If I go through this affair well, I will change my whole style of life—cut this never-ending round of dissipation, and seek for rest, and health, and variety on the American prairies, or the Norwegian fiords. If I get safely through this—what is this strange presentiment that seems to hang so gloomily over me? I have been face to face with death before now, and never felt this strange sinking of the heart—this sense of an impending fatality which oppresses me now—I am out of tone altogether, and as nervous as a girl. A course of German baths, and then a three months' camping out in the fresh air, with plenty of exercise, and nothing but fresh water will make another man of me."

He yawned as he spoke, and pulling himself together with a mighty effort, strolled out of the theater. The usual crowd of roughs, link-boys, and hangers-on, was collected round the doors, and one of them ran for a cab.

Sir Frederick gave him a small fee for his trouble, and was stepping into the vehicle, when he suddenly drew back.

"What's that?" he cried, pointing into the corner of the carriage; "who is sitting there?"

The linkman put in his head and looked round the cab. On withdrawing it, he said:

"I don't see anything—what do you mean?"

"It is gone now," said Sir Frederick, after a hasty glance. "Stand aside, let me get in."

The linkman closed the door upon him, and as the cab drove on, turned to his mates, and said:

"That cove's off his head. I thought he'd got the delirium tremens, or something of that sort. Bless if I didn't think by his face he had seen a ghost in the carriage; and there was nothing there, not even Joe's nose-bag."

Sir Frederick Randall threw himself back in the cab, and pressed his hands upon his eyes. What was the matter with him? Was he going to have a fit or a paralytic stroke? Unquestionably, he had seen something—some undefined shape—lying there in the vehicle; but on mentioning it, he had only exposed himself to the ridicule of the bystanders; yet, even at that moment, he was half fearful of looking towards the corner of the vehicle where he had seen the figure.

All right now; nothing there; he was a little unstrung, that was all; but he could set that right in a moment with a glass of brandy. He recollected that in a few minutes the cab must pass by one of his clubs, and as they passed the door, he stopped the driver and descended.

The hall porter was dozing in his easy-chair as the baronet brushed past him, but he roused at the foot-steps, and stared at the visitor with an eager gaze, very different from his usual respectful manner.

Sir Frederick noticed it. "What the deuce are you looking at, John?" he asked.

"Nothing, Sir Frederick," replied the man; "having a little doze, Sir Frederick—woke up suddenly, that's all."

Sir Frederick passed into the billiard-room, and called for a glass of brandy. There were only a few men there, just finishing a game of pool. He knew none of them, but thought they seemed to eye him curiously, so he tossed off his liquor and withdrew.

The generous spirit renewed the heart within him; as he passed out of the door the hall porter noticed the change in his face.

"Looks like himself again, now," he muttered. "Ruining himself by late hours—what the devil people sit up late for, when they are not obliged to, for their own pleasure, I never could understand."

No shadowy figure in the cab now. With his breast aglow, Sir Frederick does not even throw a glance before him, but bids the cabman to drive on to Park Lane and jumps into the vehicle.

His train of thought has changed very much, and his anticipations are now roseate-hued. He shall shoot this man who has insulted him; he feels that! Not kill him, but merely sufficiently disable him to prevent the possibility of his hectoring over or bullying English gentlemen for sometime to come.

"What could have made the man, a total stranger, anxious to pick a quarrel with me, unless indeed, he were a relative, or a relative of Lady Randall's or perhaps a former lover?" Sir Frederick smiled grimly to himself, as that idea came into his mind. "If I thought that were the cause," he said, "I would certainly kill him! I have no particular love for milady, but if I did not make an example of the first man who tries to bully me for her sake, there is no knowing how many more I may have to deal with."

"Home at last!" Not even a policeman to be seen in the long perspective of the deserted street, not a foot fall on the ear. As Sir Frederick slams the door of the cab on quitting it, the noise re-echoes among the surrounding buildings, and he hears the rattle of departing wheels long after the vehicle is out of sight.

For he does not go in on the instant, but stands on the doorstep, his hand in his pocket searching for his key, his thoughts wandering. Something of the old feeling of horror has come upon him again, but he strives against it. He finds the key, lets himself into the hall, and closes the door behind him.

The hall strikes cold and chilly. It is lumbered with packages of things which he has selected from among the furniture and ornaments, and which he is going to send to the store-house. It is quite dark and Sir Frederick stumbles against these packages, as he gropes his way towards the marble slab on which Foster, the valet, is in the habit of leaving a candle and matches for his master.

Here is the slab, but the candle is not there, nor are the matches! Then Sir Frederick recalls that he had given Foster leave to go into the country for two or three days to see his relations. The valet will not be there, then, when Major Murdoch comes the next morning, and he, Sir Frederick, will have to be roused up to hear the message which the Major brings.

Angry at his own forgetfulness, the baronet cautiously feels his way through the hall and along the broad passage opposite, at the end of which is the room in which he has slept since his return from the hotel. There are matches there, he knows; knows, too, where to lay his hand upon them.

Why does he pause, on reflection, half draw back, and then, leaning forward, strive to peer into the darkness beyond? Why does he turn his head aside, and listen eagerly? Can it be real, that sound of hard and regular breathing, or is it merely his imagination?

Another instant and he stepped into the room; the matches are there, as he expected, on the mantle-shelf, and he has no difficulty in striking a light. As the gas flares up, he looks quickly round him.

Nothing out of place—all as he left it.

And yet this strange, nervous feeling continued.

He draws his breath thickly, and glances stealthily around him.

Look at the bed. It is made of mahogany, in the French fashion, broad and heavy, and there is no space between it and the ground for a man to hide. Not so the wardrobe, in the far corner! Its deep recesses would afford a splendid place for concealment—and its heavy doors stand an inch or two open; he may as well close and turn the key in them; he will feel safer then.

He advances for this purpose, when suddenly the wardrobe doors fly open, and something—he knows not what—springs out!

In an instant he is on his back, the something (which he now makes out to be a man) kneeling on his chest, with one hand pressing tightly on his throat, and the other pulling at a rope by which his arms are lassoed and bound.

He would cry aloud, but the grip at his throat is too tight—growing tighter, too, at each attempt he makes to speak.

The suffocation becomes terrible. Are his senses leaving him? No, he feels a hot breath in his face, he hears a deep voice in his ear. And this is what it says:

"Die, dog! die! Here you lie, helpless and hopeless—no one to hear you cry—no one to lend you aid. Your hour has come, Frederick Randall! Do you know whose knees are on your chest—whose grip is at your throat? Dick Phillimore's—Dick Phillimore, whom you insulted and struck, who has owed months of madness and misery to your brutality, now has you in his power, and avenges himself and Kitty Moreton at the same time!"

The old housekeeper rapped at her master's door next morning, and, after waiting some time without getting an answer, entered the room.

The shutters were closed, but the gas was still burning; and the first thing that struck her sight was the dead body of Sir Frederick, curled upon the floor, with his arms lashed to his sides by a rope, and the face horribly discolored.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT LAST.

At a little after seven the following morning in the midst of a cold, half frozen rain, which was slowly falling three gentlemen were walking up and down outside the Charing Cross Railway station. Two of them were together, the third alone, but all eagerly scrutinized the occupants of the cabs which were driving up in quick succession, and all turned away in apparent disappointment after each inspection.

Suddenly one of the two who were patrolling together laid his hand on his companion's arm.

"It is Major Murdoch, I am certain of it," he said. "I caught a glimpse of his face just now as he passed, and recognized him at once—he at least is punctual."

"What is the good of this punctuality if his principal does not keep his time?" said Wilbur Hoyt, excitedly. "It is the other man I want to see—this one is merely an accessory."

"You do not think Sir Frederick Randall is shirking, do you, Wilbur?"

"My dear Henry," said Wilbur Hoyt, "you are irritable to a degree. There is yet five minutes before the train starts, and I have no doubt Sir Frederick will put in an appearance. Meanwhile, control yourself, I beg. Your excitable manner is attracting the attention of everybody present—passengers, porters, and all."

"I cannot help it," said Colonel Willamette, "when I think of what that poor girl has suffered at the hands of this scoundrel."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Wilbur Hoyt; "but there is no necessity for taking all the world into your confidence. Just wait here an instant while I step up to the major and see what he has to say about his friend's delay."

Major Murdoch recognized Mr. Hoyt at once and greeted him courteously.

"You and your friend, who is, I presume, Colonel Willamette, are doubtless surprised at Sir Frederick Randall's non-appearance. I was at his house after leaving you last night, but could make no one hear, so I imagined it not unlikely that his valet is absent, and that he, having no one to call him, has overslept himself. However, I have sent up my servant to tell Sir Frederick to hurry down here, and expect him at once."

A cab came tearing up as the major spoke, and a man jumped hastily out, and looked round him.

"Here, Willis," cried the major, "what the devil is the matter with the fellow," he added in an undertone. "He looks as white as a ghost."

Then the man advanced, and touching his hat, drew the major on one side.

"This man Randall is a coward, after all, I believe," said Colonel Willamette to his friend; "he has sent some excuse by his servant. Do you see how annoyed the major looks?"

"Pray be quiet, Henry," said Wilbur; "your impatience is quite out of place. Besides, that is not an expression of annoyance on Major Murdoch's face, if I take it rightly; it is something else."

As he finished speaking, Major Murdoch advanced towards him. He was very grave, and his head was bowed on his breast.

"My servant brings me very serious news, gentlemen," he said, in a low voice. "My poor friend, Sir Frederick Randall, is beyond your vengeance, Colonel Willamette."

"Good Heavens! What do you mean?" cried the colonel.

"He was found, half an hour ago, in his dressing-room dead, and from all the evidences, there is no doubt that he has been foully murdered."

Colonel Willamette staggered back. "This is too horrible!" he cried.

"Is there no trace of the assassin? Is there no motive for the deed?" asked Wilbur Hoyt.

"At present none; but the discovery has only just been made, and all is now in confusion. Of course, our intended business is at an end. You will excuse me, gentlemen; I must see what use I can be in Park Lane."

The major raised his hat, and bowing courteously, jumped into the cab which had brought his servant to the station and drove rapidly away.

When the vehicle disappeared, Wilbur Hoyt, who had been looking after it, turned, and found his friend buried in thought.

"This is an unexpected and a sad ending, Henry," he said, taking the colonel's arm; "but the result is the same as if the object of your mission had been accomplished. Sir Frederick Randall is dead, and his wife is avenged without your having the sin of his blood on your head."

"That is true," said Colonel Willamette, "but I was prepared to take that risk upon myself. The image of this man, falling by my bullet, has been before me more than once, as you will easily believe, and was contemplated by me with the utmost sincerity; but the thought of his falling by the hand of an assassin is too horrible, and I cannot get it out of my mind."

"I can understand the feeling," said Wilbur Hoyt. "It will be a horrible shock to Lady Randall, but the thought that she is now free should bring its consolation to her—and to other people."

The news that Sir Frederick Randall had been found murdered in his own house, spread like wildfire through London, and was the general topic of conversation at the clubs, and in all society.

The deceased baronet was known in all sorts of circles: in some, intimately, in others, by sight and by repute; and many and various were the comments made upon him and his career, which had ended so horribly. Of course every exertion was made to trace the murderer, and to ascribe some cause for the murder, but in this last particular, the police were entirely in fault.

Sir Frederick's watch and purse were found in his pockets; not a single article of value was missing from the room, and it was evident that robbery was not the motive by which the perpetrator of the crime had been actuated.

That the deceased had been killed out of revenge, seemed equally unlikely. He was known to live in a loose dissipated set, but of late his transactions of play had been much more moderate than formerly, and had been marked by none of those wild outbursts of passion, which in earlier times, when the sums for which he gambled were really an object to him, characterized his proceedings.

The fact that Sir Frederick had sent away his valet for a few days' holiday, at first generated an idea that he had committed suicide, but this notion was dispelled by the testimony of those who first found the body, and who declared that the manner in which the arms were lashed to the sides, must have been the work of another person.

So the popular excitement ran through its usual phase. The Park Lane mystery, as it was called, was the favorite topic of the newspapers for some days; the police were alternately praised and bullied in the press; finally some other subject of interest arose, and the murder of Sir Frederick Randall was only remembered by those who had a direct interest in it.

About a week after the murder, and while town and country were still ringing with its details, a laborer on a farm, within twenty miles of London, going at early morning to his work, saw something huddled up by the side of a barn.

Going to it, and turning it over, he found it to be the dead body of a man, horribly emaciated and thinly clad. On its being carried to the dead-house and examined by the parish surgeon, that functionary declared that death had ensued from want of nourishment, and from exposure to the cold.

The case was rather an awkward one, occurring in a country which boasts of its civilization; but, fortunately, the dead man was not a resident of the neighborhood; he had come from distant parts, and nothing was known about him. So that the coroner's jury, after a very short deliberation, returned a verdict in accordance with the evidence, and the subject of its investigation was speedily hurried into a pauper's grave.

So there was none to know that that wretched remnant of mortality, over which the officiating clergyman of the ceremony cantered through a decoction of the burial service, had once been jovial, genial, careless Richard Phillimore!

Winter has passed away, and spring is fast turning into summer; the landlord of the little inn at Roland-sack on the Rhine is in expectation of a swarm of tourists, coming to inspect that lovely neighborhood, and is making preparations to receive them by painting his hotel and reorganizing his stock of horses, carriages, mules, and boats.

With the latter, however, he is somewhat behind-hand, and there is only one craft—and that a sufficiently crazy one—to ply between the mainland and that favorite resort of pleasure-seekers, the little island of Nanenworth.

For this boat, even at so early a season, there is a strong demand; and the landlord is forced to go in person to wait upon two ladies who have already engaged it, and entreat them to receive an addition to their party. The landlord finds the ladies ready dressed for the excursion, and remarks, as he has indeed remarked before, being an observant man, that they are young and good-looking.

These facts did not render the host less polite, and he is all bows and shoulder shrugs.

The honorable ladies have engaged the boat; that there is no controverting; would they object to the presence of two gentlemen—most honorable gentlemen, and from their own country, England—who wished to make the excursion, and who are pressed for time?

The smaller and slighter of the two ladies looks at her companion, and makes a little grimace expressive of discontent; but after a whispered colloquy between them, the other lady turns to the landlord, and signifies their permission.

After the landlord has expressed his gratitude for their condescension, and taken his departure, the lady who had spoken to him turned to her friend:

"We could not do otherwise, dear," she said; "and, as he takes you for an Englishwoman, it will serve to impress him somewhat favorably, and do away with the idea that all my country-people are so ill-tempered and reserved."

"I suppose you are right, Kitty," said her companion; "but it does seem hard that our little bit of a romantic trip should be spoiled by the introduction of two prosaic Englishmen, who will say 'yes' and 'ah' and 'indeed,' and glance over the convent in which poor Hilda passed her life, with as much apathy and coldness as if they were inspecting a cotton factory in their own gloomy land."

"You certainly are not polite to my countrymen, dear," said Kitty, with a smile; but, perhaps, these two may not prove so terrible as you suppose. At all events, at the distance, their looks are rather in their favor."

She pointed as she spoke, and Lady Randall—for it saw she—who was looking in the direction indicated was two gentlemen approaching, preceded by the smiling landlord.

She intended to take but a cursory glance; but something in the walk and movement of one of the figures seemed to attract her attention. She started and looked again; then turning rapidly aside, said to her friend:

"One of these gentlemen is known to me: Colonel Willamette; you have heard me speak of him, and I would rather not meet him now—cannot we turn away?"

"Both of them are known to both of us," said Kitty, who had been following her glance, "but it would be impossible to miss them now without manifest rudeness—they are here?"

"This way, most honorable gentlemen," said the chattering landlord, approaching. "Here's the little ship which will take you—and here the most honorable ladies who are to be your companions."

As they neared the ladies, the two gentlemen raised their hats; but as soon as Colonel Willamette, who was the first to look up, perceived Lady Randall, he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

Nor was his companion, Wilbur Hoyt, less astonished. But the greeting between the four was very quiet and undemonstrative—"quite English," Lady Randall called it afterwards—and almost in silence they took their places in the boat, and were ferried across the rushing river.

But when they reached the other side, and were walking in what had been the garden of the convent, without any pre-arrangement they divided into two couples, Lady Randall and Colonel Willamette walking first, and Wilbur Hoyt and Kitty following them at some little distance.

"This is a strange meeting, Lady Randall," said the colonel, striving to speak with a light and unembarrassed air.

"Very strange, indeed," said Lady Randall, looking aside; "but what a beautiful place! There is a legend connected with it, is there not?"

"There is," said the colonel, eyeing her sternly. "The brave Roland, a German knight of old family and tried valor, was called away to the Crusades, and left his betrothed Hilda mourning his absence. After some years, a false report of his death arrived, and Hilda, in despair, took the veil and became a nun in this very convent, of which we now see the ruins. Roland was not killed, as rumored; and on his return, finding that his loved one was lost to him forever, he took up his abode in the castle yonder across the river, where his only solace was in watching Hilda as she walked in the garden with the other nuns."

"Men were devoted in those days," said Lady Randall.

"And do you think that no such devotion exists now?" asked the colonel, bending forward. "Do you think that even at this present day, there are not men whose life is one dull blank, owing to the way in which they have been treated by women—who have placed their affections on one alone, who can receive the consolation from none other, and who pass their lives solitary and celibate as the poor wretch in the tower yonder, mourning over what might have been?"

He spoke with heat and passion. Lady Randall looked up at him timidly.

"How do you know this?" she asked.

"From bitter experience," he said. "Nearly two years ago I asked you to become my wife, telling you you were the only woman I ever loved. You refused me then, and I agreed to accept my fate. I have accepted it in silence, but it is not the less bitter!"

She was silent still, and after a pause, he continued:

"The last words I said to you at that time, were to implore you to send for me when my presence was required. If one is to believe what the world says, that time came, and I heard nothing from you."

"Do you allow nothing for my pride?" she asked.

"No," he replied quickly. "I do not allow that, against the happiness of my life."

"Nor shall it," she exclaimed. "By becoming a nun, Hilda took an irrevocable step; my misfortunes have not driven me to that."

She looked up, and their eyes met. In both of them there was the same earnest glance. Her little hand found a resting-place on his strong arm. Then their further conversation was carried on in so low a tone, that the historian found it impossible to record it.

Nor was the talk of the other people less interesting—to them, at least. After the ordinary civilities had passed between them, Wilbur Hoyt said:

"I am somewhat of a fatalist, Mrs. Moreton, and inclined to believe that it was not by mere chance that we met this day in this place."

"But we used to meet not unfrequently in London, Mr. Hoyt, though it must be some time now since I have seen you."

"It was not without intention that I kept myself away," said Wilbur. "I had prescribed to myself a certain line of conduct which I intended to hold to; but the fact of there being only one ferryboat for four people has made me change the base of my operations."

"Won't you explain yourself, Mr. Hoyt?" said Kitty, looking up at him in wonder.

"With pleasure," he replied. "It would be absurd affectation in me, Mrs. Moreton, to pretend to suppose that you had forgotten the first interview between us in London, immediately after your arrival from Brauxholme—in that interview I explained the purport of my visit, and asked you to accept me for your husband. In return, and while telling me of the existence of an obstacle which rendered a compliance with my wish impossible, you reposed in me a confidence with which I felt highly honored, and which I need scarcely say I have kept. But suppose," said Wilbur Hoyt, looking earnestly at her—"suppose that I had discovered that that obstacle no longer exists; suppose that I had discovered this, not now, but months ago; and while fully aware of it, had yet determined not inopportunely to press my suit!"

Kitty's face went very pale.

"Is this so?" she asked.

"This is so," replied Wilbur Hoyt; "though but for the accident of the ferryboat, you might not have heard of it for weeks or months."

"Then you knew that?"

"I knew everything," said Wilbur Hoyt. "It is a characteristic of our nation that we do not sleep over anything when we take it in hand. When you hinted at that romance in your history, I, an idle man, with my thoughts filled with nothing but you, found I might as well devote myself to tracing it as anything else. So I began going backward through the history of your life, and finding out where you had been—the cottage at Brauxholme, the lodging in London, and Brighton, and Scarborough, right away back to your father's farm, in Surrey. I visited them all, and gleaned scraps of information about you. So that when a certain event took place, I knew that not merely Lady Randall, but that you also were free."

There was a pause for a moment.

"And know you that, and still retaining the same sentiments," said Kitty.

"Undoubtedly," chimed in Wilbur Hoyt; "no question of that."

"You refrained from seeing me again—it was most honorable, most delicate of you!"

"It was," said Mr. Hoyt, "but as the ferryboat has brought this about it is now time, I think, that my delicacy and honor should be rewarded. The objection which you raised before does not obtain, now have you any other?"

"I think not," said Kitty, in a low voice and with a downcast look.

"Then," said Mr. Hoyt, putting her arm through his, "We will voyage together henceforth."

Crow Nest, the old house on the Hudson River, is not desolate now. Through its large rooms and long galleries and broad gardens, there is constant pattering of childish feet and shouts of childish laughter, and when papa is out overlooking his property, or mamma has gone down for a few days to New York, little Minnie and little Harry always find the kindest companions in grandpapa and grandmama Adams, who are not by any means ruined, but have built themselves quite a palatial residence in the neighborhood.

Last Summer, indeed, the grandparents had the sole charge of the little ones, for the colonel and Mrs. Willamette were in Europe, and passed a wonderfully happy six weeks in cruising on board the "Columbia," with Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt.

Wilbur may be said to have settled in England, partly to please his wife, of whom he is inordinately fond, and partly to enjoy the society of Dr. Traversa, for whom he has taken the greatest fancy, and with whom he spends much of his time in the discussion of philosophical and social questions.

When they are alone over their wine they often talk of the strange fatality, by which Wilbur was instrumental in rescuing Kitty's life; but the doctor keeps locked in his own breast the identity of Frederick Randall with Russell, the forger, and all the strange circumstances under which he first made the acquaintance of the transgressor who had gone to the bad.

[THE END.]

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